**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**COSMO TERRIGNO**

Hello everyone and welcome to the Woodland Country Day School commencement exercises of 2022!!! To the parents, friends, and families of our graduates, I want to express a collective expression of gratitude for all you’ve done to support, encourage, and cheer on our students. To the teachers, faculty, and administrators, I want to acknowledge you for your commitment and dedication to seeing to it that the students… and especially today, these graduates… of WCDS, have what they need to weather the challenges presented, and to ensure that, no matter what, no matter where, and of course, no matter how, our students **LEARN**…. And while conditions may not have been…. actually **WEREN’T** optimal for the past couple of years, you, along with these graduates, got the job done…. And did so admirably… with grace, determination, and enthusiasm. I think it’s safe to say that this graduating class has really put in the effort, taken the time, figured out how to get the job of learning done… no matter the circumstances, and they have done more than **try**… they have **triumphed**…. In the face of unprecedented challenges. I know I have partners … actually **ALL OF YOU PRESENT**… who agree with that… I am reminded of an expression I heard a little while ago, from professional basketball player Marvin Phillips. He said, quite simply, “The difference between try and triumph is a little ***umph***… (**Wait for the laugh**).

Graduates, to you, I want to say so much more than “Congratulations.” I want to acknowledge each one of you for staying the course… for showing up… whether online or in person…. And for upholding the mission and tenets of this school. You have admirably learned and used the principles that are the foundation of Woodland Country Day School, including, 1- “Help us to stand for the hard right against the easy wrong” 2- “Teach us to work as hard and play as fair in your sight alone, as if all the world saw” 3- “Forgive us when we are unkind and help us to forgive those who are unkind to us”  and as you leave the caring, nurturing halls of Ivy Manor, please remember: 4- “Send us chances to do some good every day and so to grow more in your grace and favor.”

You’ve taken the legacy of this school and you’ve added to its meaning and importance. This graduation ceremony signifies that you, too…. All of you… join your predecessors in demonstrating the value of acquiring the education you’ve received from WCDS, and as I just said, you did it with enthusiasm and a great degree of **UMPH**!! We are all very confident that as you make your way to the next steps of your scholastic careers, your Woodland education has prepared you well to meet the demands you will face… academically, socially, and developmentally in high school, college, and beyond.

Each year, I grow more and more impressed with the depth and diversity of our students and our graduating class. This class is no exception, and your dedication to your classmates, your education, and the way you come together as a community, is inspiring. It reminds me of an international event that has just returned. Recently, after an absence of two years, due to the pandemic, participants in the Invictus Games gathered in the Netherlands to meet and compete once again. For those of you that may not know, these games are kind of like the Olympics, but probably with a greater purpose. These games were formed to demonstrate the power of sport, community, and rehabilitation for those in the military, wounded in combat. The organization was founded by Prince Harry, and in his welcome speech, he said something that resonates with me, something I find worth repeating. “To be role models… it takes strength and courage… No matter what you want to be when you grow up, it’s your **character** that matters most.” Throughout the years that you’ve been here, no matter the atmosphere… whether it was in pre-pandemic days, or during the “new normal” when we all saw the continuance of COVID 19 restrictions, your **CHARACTER** shone through… individually and collectively. You’ve faced your hesitations with understanding and your ability to adapt and cope… although sometimes reluctantly… and understandably, is indicative of the comprehension usually found in much older students. You continue to seek out ways to help others and to make the learning experience fun. … (**If you want to, you can say**) We must be doing **SOMETHING** right!! (**and wait for the laugh).**

Albert Einstein once said, “Education is not the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind to think.” Woodland Country Day School is thankful to have had a part in supporting you in building your character and assisting you in learning to think. As you leave Ivy Manor today, probably for the last time in your “official” student capacity, please do not forget how proud we all are of each one of you. I wish all of you graduates a really heartfelt congratulations and, of course, Thank you!!