**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**COSMO TERRIGNO**

Hello everyone!!! To the parents, families, and friends here today, welcome to this year’s commencement activities for the 2023 graduating class of Woodland Country Day School. To the distinguished guests, advisors, and administrators present, it’s wonderful to see so many of you in attendance. Your presence and encouragement go a long way to echo the importance of education and mentorship. To the younger students in attendance, yet to reach the “lofty pinnacle” of your own graduation, thank you for joining us, to get a “sneak peek” of how it’s done and what it means to be in a class of your peers… accomplished, focused, aware students, about to go forth and claim their destiny in the world. To this year’s graduates, the “**magnificent seven**,” I know I express the good wishes of everyone present when I extend heartfelt congratulations for this very well earned achievement.

Woodland Country Day School has been in existence for almost forty years. This spot, here on the steps of Ivy Manor, has seen many commencement exercises, and for that, we are really grateful. This school… its programs and principles…. its educators and guiding lights, have seen thousands of students enter our buildings, run on our fields, perform on our stages, and build the critical foundations of their lives…fortunately, without fail….for the most part…. And this year’s crop of promising, pro-active graduates is no exception. This year, we congratulate seven “mighty mentees,” seven people who are about to find their way and make their mark on the world.

It is with pride and purpose that each year, at this time, I stand here and express myself in ways to acknowledge the importance of this passage and to recognize what it has taken for each of you graduates to arrive at this milestone in your lives. While some of you have spent a relatively brief time here at Woodland Country Day, all of you have been here long enough to absorb what it means to be a part of this process….. to have benefitted from the impact of knowing that you had the most comprehensive, well-rounded, diverse, and meaningful education available. So much of that quality foundation is thanks to the staff, programs, and encouragement we offer our students. I must say though, that the bulk of credit…. acknowledgement…support…. encouragement goes to the parents and families who recognize how crucial it is to receive a thorough education in an private school atmosphere that really nurtures young people as individuals and the most effective way for them to learn. For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be an educator. In the context of Woodland Country Day School, I find tremendous gratification in the hard work we do, imparting knowledge so that the future is handled by bright young people, who, by the way, teach me, every day.

Everything around us serves to teach us. While this is mostly true in a school environment, graduates, it is now up to you to realize this is true in all aspects of life. You’re moving on to “bigger games…” larger schools, more people, and increased opportunities for study and extra-curricular activities. Your world is about to expand and it is up to you to focus, pay attention, and really begin to identify and choose the lives you will live as you grow into adulthood. Growing up and becoming more of who you are can present challenges. I want each one of you graduates to never forget that, no matter what comes your way, you can do it. Every one of those challenges in life…. even the ones that appear to be impossible, can be managed. With your education, you have been given the elements that form the “tool box” of life… those tools… the lessons you’ve learned… the way in which you forged connections and friendships… the consideration and most importantly, the **thoughtfulness** you apply to every situation, provide you with the means to deal with the situations that will no doubt pop up in your lives. A man named Theodore Roszak said, “Nothing we ever imagined is beyond our powers, only beyond our present self-knowledge.” Now is the time in your lives to really grow that knowledge base…. to learn how to assess situations…. And to use common sense in making choices.

Because it is so important to respect the past while going forth into the future, I believe in honoring the reminders from long ago to keep me grounded, and in turn, teach me. Many wise words have been said about education and I would like to share some of them with you. There is a Chinese proverb that states, “Teachers open the door, but you must enter yourself.” You will find, as you get older, that **EVERYONE** and everything becomes your teacher…. And you thought you were almost done with us!! (**Wait for the laugh**). It was Aristotle who said, “The more I **want** to get something done, the less I call it work.” Find the **joy** in learning. Develop and nurture curiosity. Really get into understanding what anything is all about. Finally, one very wise person reminds us, “You haven’t failed until you stop trying.” I think that’s the greatest lesson we can learn. It knows no age. It knows no limitations. Just remember to keep trying. Stretch yourselves further than you’ve done in the past and before you know it, your educational tool kit will grow to be very large!!

Once again, thank you all for being here, and to all of our graduates, you have officially taken your place in the history and “legend” of Woodland Country Day School!!! Congratulations!!