

Graduation day is a time to reflect upon yesterday, appreciate today, and anticipate tomorrow. Yesterday, or our past, seems like just moments ago. Yesterday highlights the first time we walked to the bus with our valuable Barbie or Ninja Turtle backpacks and our adorable cartoon lunchboxes. Our parents would stand on the side of the street taking countless pictures as we smiled and waved, or in other cases, nervously bowed our heads down and cried as we entered the bus, which seemed overwhelmingly enormous at the time. During those days, we met other scared children who would later turn out to be our life long friends and attended our first Streams Extravaganza, Baker Caper, or Eisenhower. Those moments were precious because every obstacle that was presented was simply a new experience and something for us to learn from. The only worries on our simple minds were about the lunch menu at school that particular day and the start time for recess. Everything just seemed easier in those years, and it was. Little did we know how much was to come. In a blink of an eye we were shuttled off to Boyce. Those two years held more importance than we may think because those were the years when we were first joined together and truly started defining our class as a whole. There we experienced countless field trips, developed close bonds with our teachers, and had the unforgettable times with our parents at Deer Valley. Next was Fort Couch. These were truly transitional years that took us from childhood through adolescence. Here, within those two years, we began developing a sense of our true identity and a sense of who are real friends are. Every passing day presented an additional opportunity to learn more about ourselves, about our friends, and about our families. Finally we made the big time, high school. In hindsight, these past four years seem like four days because each passing year has gone by increasingly faster. We were truly blessed to attend one of the top high schools in the state. However, the small worries about the lunch menu and recess times now escalated and transformed into project due dates, test dates, and the struggle to conform to social standards. Collectively, these past years we have achieved much. Academically, our school is unparalleled. Athletically, we have been highly successful with the particular shout out to the boys' soccer and golf teams who won state championships and to all the other teams who made playoffs or won sections or wpials. Even though we are comparatively small in number to the schools we compete against, I think we proved that our hard work, dedication, and talents allowed us to compete with anyone. However, yesterday is gone.

Today, we stand proudly in front of our teachers, administrators, friends, and families hoping we upheld the highest tradition and values at Upper St. Clair high school. On a day like this, it's appropriate to stand back, take a breath, and recognize how far we have come. From senior cruise, to our last homecoming, to our last sadies, to senior banquet, and prom, we have truly accumulated exceptional moments this year that will remain close to our minds and close to our hearts for a lifetime. And even though we aren't wearing our cute themed backpacks like we did that first day of school twelve years ago, our parents gather with us once again as we stand tall in our caps and gowns not only transformed physically, but also mentally and emotionally. Some of us may yet again have our heads bowed down like we did on that Monday twelve years ago

nervous for what's to come. But this time, we are no longer those naïve little children, but rather mature young men and women moving forward with confidence and lessons learned from the first chapter in our lives.

Tomorrow, we are propelled into the unknown and whatever path life may lead us. We are only at the beginning of our journey and there are endless great things to come. All we have to do is open our eyes and our hearts and maintain a positive outlook so we are able to receive opportunities when they present themselves to us. Opportunities are not always what we think they will be; they are often times born out of what we might otherwise consider disappointment. We must use our strength to see the good in everything.

While we reflect upon yesterday, appreciate today, and anticipate tomorrow, it's also important to recognize that for those who are given much, much is expected. What I believe that means is that we can no longer be self-focused, but also must strive to make the world a better place for those around us. If we can achieve that, it's not only yesterday, today, and tomorrow, but it's also forever.

A very sincere thank you to administrators, teachers, security officers, lunchroom workers, maintenance workers, and everyone who contributes to make this high school the best in the state. I'd also like to thank parents, grandparents, friends, and family for the overwhelming support and guidance over the past twelve years. And a huge congratulations to the graduating class of 2014.

Thank you.