

## **GRADUATION 2009 SUPERINTENDENT'S REMARKS**

It is a little sobering to be preparing graduation remarks with the realization that you have absolutely no recollection of anything anyone said at your high school graduation ceremony. I do have a memory of attending some kind of year-end awards dinner during my senior year at which the assistant principal gave each of us in attendance a letter opener with the school logo on it. Clearly it was a different time ... First of all, the concept of a letter opener most likely does not register with most of you students given that you don't need one to open text messages or Facebook pages. Second of all, picture the newspaper headlines in today's world if Mr. Alterbaum handed out knifelike objects to a bunch of high school seniors.

So in acknowledgement of changing times, instead of giving you a letter opener, I am going to give you an "app." Before you get too excited, let me hasten to add that this is not the iPhone variety. It is instead an admittedly corny acronym representing the first letter in 3 key words that I encourage you to store in the back of your minds for future reference.

The first word is Adaptability. Not only is it a different time from back in the day when I graduated, it is a different time from this time last year. In one way or another, we have all become much more aware of how the economy affects our daily lives. When times get tough, the people who are the most adaptable are the ones who survive with the least harmful consequences. It is a generally accepted prediction that many of you will change careers several times during your working lives. This should be a very freeing notion for you because you do not need to feel like the choices you make in the next few years will dictate a single career path for the rest of your lives. Instead, you should be thinking about how the next steps you take will prepare you to be able to adapt to changes in the world around you and changes in your own interests and ambitions.

The second word is Perseverance. The best selling author, Malcolm Gladwell, wrote a book entitled *Outliers* in which he argues that people who have achieved great success were not necessarily born with significantly more natural talent than many of us. Instead, they had some talent but they took advantage of opportunities that came their way and then invested way more hours than most of us do in developing their talents to achieve notable success. In fact, in researching their paths to success, Gladwell calculated

that highly successful people like Bill Gates, the Beatles, and superstar athletes shared in common the kind of perseverance that translated to an investment of at least 10,000 hours of hard work leading up to their success. To put that in proportion, you have invested about 14,000 hours in school time (some of you a little less depending on your attendance record) up to this point. So you should be really great at being students by now. However, if you want to be highly successful at something more specific, you will need to demonstrate perseverance in investing the time it takes to accomplish that goal.

The third word is Proportionality. To the extent that adults at the end stage of their working lives look back with regret, it is often because they allowed the demands of their work to overshadow other aspects of their lives. Maybe they did not spend as much time with their family as they would have liked and they don't have a close relationship with their grown children as a result. Maybe they did not give themselves the opportunity to pursue a hobby or a passion in their lives and they don't know what to do with themselves when they retire. Maybe they did not devote enough time to taking care of themselves and they are not healthy enough to do everything they would like to do in their retirement. As you prepare to move into adulthood, it is very important that you make a commitment from the beginning to establish a healthy balance of proportionality between work, relationships, play, and your physical well being.

I hope you download this "app" so you can ask yourself periodically ... "Am I developing the adaptability I will need to thrive as the world changes around me?" "Am I demonstrating the perseverance it will take to be successful in achieving the goals I have set for myself?" "Does the lifestyle I have chosen reflect a healthy sense of proportionality regarding what is truly important?" If you can answer "yes" to those questions, chances are you will find yourself leading a happy and fulfilling life.

Meanwhile, congratulations to you on reaching this milestone in your lives and to your parents and teachers who have invested so much of themselves in making it possible for you to be sitting here tonight.