

Promotion Speech 2014

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Look at you, all here tonight. I am so very proud of you! "Let's hear it for the TMS Class of 2014!"

Well, here you sit, in this toasty gym, with so much accomplished, and yet, so much more to do. Four years from now you will be sitting in similar seats, maybe even these very same seats if the high school needs to borrow them – and you will be looking at these very **same** proud faces, who are dreaming much the **same** dreams for you - *that you will find success, achieve happiness and never lose hope.*

You have an important decision to make this summer. And I urge you to think about this... Will you define your high school or will it define you? Take some time this summer to actually stop and think. Put down the volleyball, drop the PlayStation controller, let your grandparents borrow the Wii for the weekend, and THINK: what do I want to be? What do I want THS to be?

Your actions in high school, as in every place in life, will speak louder than your words. Your actions will define you, and so it is important for you, and for THS, that you consider what they say.

You are living in an exciting time. Gosh, with advances in medicine, some of you may see the 22nd century. That notion conjures in the minds of myself and your parents' visions of our childhood experiences with Buck Rogers on TV...and for your grandparents in comic books... and no, he wasn't a quarterback, and no, it isn't a restaurant off of I-84. Ask your parents about it.

In your lifetime the minorities will become the majorities, women will increasingly join men in power, and hopefully the them and the theys will become the US...but this last part depends on **you**, and this last part starts **here**, with the decisions you make this summer.

Will you defend the weak?

Will you help the suffering?

Will you exchange with no person evil for evil?

Unfortunately for you, things get very confusing don't they? Our culture puts too much emphasis on payback, and not enough on pay it forward. The veneration of PAYBACK has been a part of our culture, unfortunately, for a long time. For your grandparents the payback ICON was John Wayne, for your parents and I, it was probably someone like Dirty Harry, and for you it may be Vin Diesel, or Bruce Wayne... the theme is the same, however, get the bad guys for what they did to you, your dog, your friend, your family...

But what if... and this goes back to what I want you to think about for this summer... what if something could be done *before* the bad guys went bad?

Now I won't try to mislead you here... there are many that believe that this is a utopian, naive notion. That a world, or a town, or a high school without bad guys or "mean girls" is a dream... but, my young friends, this defines every single success story humanity has ever had... it started as some woman's or some man's or some ninth grader's *dream*.

Don't pay it back... pay it forward...

- * Buy someone you don't know lunch
- * Make someone you don't know feel better
- * Protect someone you don't hang out with
- * Be kind to everyone...

Life is notorious for providing you twists of fate... and at THS, as in life, you will find that you reap what you sow.... Before you make fun of the *thems* and the *theys* or "that kid" - keep in mind that in 10 years "that" kid could be your boss... or your EMT... or a WWE wrestler... or worst of all - a memory in your consciousness and your conscience that sticks like a splinter in your mind....

Evolved individuals **do not refrain from thoughtless, inconsiderate or careless acts** because of fear of punishment, they refrain because they realize to engage in such things spreads a disease of distrust, consternation and hate that destroys our culture. It is like setting fire to your lifeboat.

I conclude tonight urging you to believe in the collective power of you... to realize that greatness will be achieved by recognizing that the least among you can be the greatest... and to pay it forward to make THS a place you all *want* to be....

Congratulations to all of you... and to your parents... for all you have achieved, and all you will achieve....