



**CCDS Graduation Farewell Remarks**  
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**June 9, 2017**

And so, graduates, our time together is growing short. Before we bring this evening's ceremony to a close, however, I would like to say a few words about telling time. How much longer before you can throw your mortarboards into the air?

Well, graduation is kind of like a Chinese banquet. At both events, you keep your eye on the watermelon. A Chinese banquet features course after course of delicious foods: vegetables and meats, seafood and dumplings, soups both hot and cold. But when the last plate of the evening arrives - watermelon - it's like a beacon; lively conversations wrap up, heartfelt goodbyes are shared and the room is empty within five minutes.

Today, class of 2017 and assembled guests, I am the watermelon. I fear my words will not be as tasty and refreshing as those offered by Mr. Hall, Mr. Miller, Dom, Jack, and D.R., but I hope as successful as a plate of watermelon in signaling the end.

During your time at CCDS, Class of 2017, you learned how to tell Country Day time. You've navigated your education in bells, semesters, seasons, and grades. Many of you learned that a "free bell" is not "free." You determined that access to your teachers is not regulated by set office hours but rather, you could find them whenever and wherever you needed them. And, you picked up that campus never closes. Clubs, teams, and activities keep our beautiful 62 acres in a state of perpetual motion.

You also came to appreciate that not all Country Day time is the same. The trip to campus on the first and last days of a school year brings a different promise. Field trips and days of service feel distinct from a day of study in the classroom. How about a class discussion compared to a final exam? A practice in the middle of the week versus a game on Friday night?

And what about year to year? Did this year pass more quickly than your time in the Lower School? Jack began by streaming our opening ceremony on Facebook live. SATs, ACTs, college applications, the Wrap-in, plays, concerts, sports, winter and spring breaks, exams, the Clap-out, and finally senior projects. You predicted the year would go quickly when I met with each one of you last summer. I asked the younger you. "What will make this year a success?"

You clearly knew how to best use the brief "Country Day" time you had left. In your words, you hoped to:

- feel connected with classmates.
- enjoy the last year at CCDS.
- make the most out of the opportunities.
- Realize your capabilities.
- Make every moment count.

Think back to those conversations in August. So much has transpired in our school that this evening seems to have arrived early.

But time can't speed up. Can it? Atomic clocks in places like Greenwich, England keep time with incredible precision to the nanosecond. There are unbreakable constants such as the time it takes for my voice to reach your ear. This time is no different if I had been speaking to you in ancient times.

Perhaps what is different from ancient times is the accelerating pace of change that makes time feel faster today. Think about your own lives. Many of you were born near the dawn of the new millennium. No smartphones at that time. No social media. Can you imagine? As Thomas Friedman observes, incredible changes have occurred in technology, globalization, and the environment during the span of your young lives.

Time has not accelerated but our need to adapt has. And so what to do? I would say, when time speeds up, you should slow down. Let me explain a bit more.

When I was a high school teacher, I was preparing to take students to Uganda, so I enrolled in a wilderness, first aid responders course. I learned an incredible amount in that week-long experience. Most fundamentally, an unresponsive person in the woods is not very helpful. You need to run through a million lists on your own to determine what happened.

This type of learning is difficult. When broken bones, blood, and animal bites are on the line, it's not easy to memorize the appropriate care to give. With each passing day, we trained in the treatment of bigger and more spectacular injuries ending with a final nighttime simulation of a multiple-victim accident. I was nervous that night, waiting for our instructors to set up the simulation. Would my new training kick in or would my mind go blank leading to failure on this final assessment?

The simulation was amazing. The instructors recruited volunteer actors who knew how to act in an unhelpful manner. They used movie set quality make-up to create cuts and wounds that seemed very realistic. And for the final touch, they located the simulation about a mile from the classroom in the deep, dark New Hampshire woods.

When the simulation began, all I can remember was a mad dash through trails, stumbling on roots, getting hit by low hanging branches and struggling to keep my supplies in my bag but looking more like Hansel and Gretel dropping breadcrumbs as bandages and band-aids flying from my pouch. I'm sure any real patient seeing me would have run to the emergency room on their own.

When I reached the site, I sprinted to the first "patient" I could find. My mind started clicking—ABCs, four levels of consciousness, visual check of core and extremities. Heart pounding, adrenaline rushing, I could only imagine what a real situation would have felt like.

Back in the classroom after the simulation, a new emotion began to take over. Pride. Wow – nailed it! Found the patient, treated the injury, and got them out of the woods in such a short amount of time! When I sat down to debrief with one of the instructors, however, my victory was short-lived. "Impressive job but I suggest putting your hands in your pockets the next time you get to an accident scene."

Wait, what? Every minute counts in response time. Hadn't I done that?

He went on, "In our simulation tonight, the patient you were "saving" was dangerously close to a ledge and you helped them while they were in an unstable area. If this had been a real situation, it's likely you would have been injured too and possibly seriously."

Rats! Forgot the very first item on my checklist – survey the scene. I had rushed into the clearing and not taken the time to look for other dangers.

The instructor, Scott, told me that any time he comes to a big accident scene like a car crash, he always uses a trick to help him control time. He puts his hands in his pockets and begins looking around. Bystanders rush up to him and try to pull him toward the scene, but he still walks slowly until he is certain the environment is safe. "When things speed up, you have to slow down. We don't want additional victims."

Einstein claimed that time is relative. After thinking about what Scott said, I would say that not only is it relative, but you can control it. Not to the degree that you can become immortal, I but to the degree that you can control time when making important choices as your life unfolds before you.

You will be faced with manifold decisions in your lives, Class of 2017. Most will be easy, as in "tuna sandwich or Caesar salad?" but every now and then, when you least expect it, really hard choices will present

themselves. Choices that will have an impact on your life, career, and family. Choices that are not always between right and wrong but between right and right.

You're well prepared to make these choices. You've practiced compassion, courage, integrity, responsibility, and respect to help set a moral compass. You've developed a critical mind to ask questions and identify potential dangers choices may bring. You're ambitious and excited about the opportunities the future will bring.

So, if you're all set to make good choices, how do my comments this evening add value?

Simply this: Einstein was absolutely on target. With increasing change in the world today, the pace at which you'll need to make tough choices will indeed be accelerating.

And when your discerning mind identifies a crucial decision before you, slow down. Reflect. Consider. Think. Ask for help. Make sure you have seen clearly the consequences of your choice. In short, Class of 2017, put your hands in your pockets, survey the scene, and then act in the way you have been trained to bring good into your own life and the lives of so many others.

Thank you.

Audience, it's with great pleasure and our heartfelt congratulations that I present to you the Class of 2017.