



**Anthony T. T. Jaccaci**  
**Head of School**

Convocation Remarks  
Keeler Theater  
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Finally, before we begin the school year, I would like to say a few words about the wisdom found in the lyrics of a song. August 18th - this past Tuesday - was a momentous day in Cincinnati. Not only was it the first day of classes for Cincinnati Country Day, but it was also Idina Menzel day in Cincinnati. Ms. Menzel was in town performing at the PNC Pavilion, and the mayor named the day in her honor.

Many here know that Ms. Menzel is the voice behind the global phenomenon "Let it Go" a few years back in "Frozen." She also had a successful stage career before expanding into the movies and began her career in the Broadway production of "Rent."

The signature song from this musical is a beautiful piece called "Seasons of Love."

The song's lyrics begin with the following stanza:

"Five hundred twenty five thousand and six hundred minutes. how do you measure a year? In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee. In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife."

The song asks an interesting question. How do you measure time? Should it be measured by the hands of a clock or can it be measured in another way?

For example, as the new head of school, I am trying to determine how we tell time here at Country Day. I know that we all have "My Days" here. In fact, I already have a "My Day" that includes "reading Dr. Seuss to lower school students, exploring Cincinnati, and reviewing curriculum."

But I have also been told about units of time such as "bells" as in "I have a free bell before lunch and can meet you then."

I have heard about "Spirit Days" as in "you better wear as much Country Day garb as possible on Spirit Days", I have also heard about "upper school and eighth grade exams" as in "Sorry, I am busy this week."

So how do we measure a "school year"?

In some ways, it is easy. We began at 8 a.m. on August 18, 2015. We are ending at 6:30 p.m. on June 3, 2016 with commencement. Easy to say but what does this mean?

Another way to measure this year may be as follows:

- The number of homework assignments completed;
- The number of times the Keeler Theater is used for performances;
- The number of meals eaten in the dining terrace;
- The number of parent/teacher conferences;
- The number of textbooks purchased at the Country Cottage;

These numbers are concrete. But what about these numbers?

- The number of athletic completions in which students wore our uniforms with pride and honor;
- The number of times Country Day students worked in service to make the condition of another person better;

- The number turkeys passed and presents wrapped before the winter holidays;
- The number of conversations held with advisors about goals, dreams, and aspirations;
- The number of people welcomed to our community with a smile or “hello” during their visits to our school;
- The number of lower school students who have looked up to the middle school and upper school students in awe and admiration;
- And finally, the number of times we have come together as a community and created moments that make us a school.

If you think about it, it is not so easy to measure a school year. If you think about all we will accomplish and the challenges we will overcome, saying “8 a.m. on August 18, 2015 to 6:30 p.m. on June 3, 2016 may not quite capture it. I think it is helpful to think about the year minute by minute.

Now, it is true that about a third of 525,600 minutes are spent sleeping but what about the others? Each person will spend those minutes in his or her own way. My “school year” will look much different than David’s “school year” the same way “My Day” looks different than your “My Day.”

But it is important that we all think about those minutes.

Why?

Because every minute in our lives gives us an opportunity to make a choice.  
 Every minute, we can act with honesty or deception.  
 We can show accountability or disregard.  
 We can demonstrate kindness or indifference.  
 Every minute, we decide the course of our own lives.

I came upon a quote that once captured this idea well:

“Be mindful of your thoughts, they become words;  
 Be mindful of your words, they become actions;  
 Be mindful of your actions, they become habits;  
 Be mindful of your habits, they become character;  
 Be mindful of your character, for it becomes your destiny.”

The choices you make every minute develop into patterns that define your character.

But I would also like us to think about the character – the culture – of Cincinnati Country Day School. We do make choices in isolation but with more than 860 students and close to 150 faculty and staff, we make a huge number of collective choices. Again, if we round down to account for sleeping and the minutes we are not in school, we will still spend close to 11 billion minutes together this year. Our choices, together, will make the character and culture of the school.

This year, we will make choices together, minute by minute, that are grounded in the virtues of courage, responsibility, compassion, integrity and respect. If we do this, all of us, we will make the 90th year of the school even stronger than the 89 that have come before. We only get one shot at the 90th year after all, and seniors, this is your one go at 2016.

Let’s get to work then, one minute at a time.

Thank you.