

Margaret Cote - Valedictory Speech

Good Morning. I stand here today as your valedictorian. But if I am honest with myself, and with you, I didn't do this alone. I am here because of the students sitting behind me, the parents sitting in front of me, and the teachers and administrators to my left. I am here because Mr. Cole and Jen Stuart provided daily physics tutorials. I am here because Kenny Hodge answered my weekly facetime calls for homework help. I am here because my D block study buddies didn't judge me when I was nerdy enough to actually do homework in the library. But, more importantly, *we* are here because of the whole Newburyport community who has helped us reach this point in our lives. It is this team, this group of supporters, who have provided for us these unforgettable twelve years of schooling.

Before I move on to how special our 2018 team is, I must first acknowledge the people who have coached us along the way, our teachers. On this journey from kindergarten, I realize how truly lucky I am to have been so connected with my teachers at Newburyport. I still keep in touch with my first grade teacher, the loving Mrs. Hoiseth. And I still see the famous Ed Guadiano, because you can always seem to find him lurking somewhere within the stadium. There's also Mrs. Osgood and Mr. LaChapelle, who have so passionately taught me that history and government are actually *not* boring, and Mr. Cole and Mr. Littlefield, who taught

me some of the most important math and life lessons. Teachers like these are plentiful in this city, which is what makes our schools here so special, and so difficult to leave.

I would also like to take a moment to thank another part of this community that brought me this far, and that is my family. My brother, Matt, is the best role model I have. Thank you, Matt, for inspiring me with your successes, and for pushing me to reach my goals. I would also like to thank my parents, who have supported me constantly in everything that I have chosen to do. Dad, thank you for making my lunch every day, but I still don't like salami and cheese. Mom, thank you for making our library the most popular place to be, you actually are pretty cool. Fortunately, my support doesn't stop there. The rest of my family traveled hundreds of miles to be here, and I could not be more thankful to them for their love and encouragement throughout all of these years. I also would also like to thank my friends, who forgave me for running late or for leaving early, which, as they know, is basically all the time. If it wasn't for their patience, I'm not sure where I would be.

This school and this community have given me so much, but the memories I treasure most in high school come from the team of students sitting behind me. Though we have been described with a real variety of adjectives, some that I won't

mention, this group contains some of the most interesting and passionate people I have ever encountered. If you didn't know, Molly Laliberty is a star lacrosse goalie and a part-time slam poet. Cobie Yung can solve any physics problem known to man. Emily DeKanter knows 3 languages. Kayla Abrams and Ava Gridley are insta-famous. And, Berit Palma will one day be starring on Broadway.

Appreciating and respecting the authenticity of others allows us to see their special gifts, and understand new perspectives. There are 185 students in this class, and we would not be the Class of 2018 without our individual talents and personalities. I must say that it was quite humbling to learn about my peers' accomplishments, and to have been a part of their learning experience. I looked up to, and learned from, these incredibly talented students who have shown in both small and large settings how unique they are, and how successful they will be. It is the times that we are able to listen to others' opinions, ideas, and thoughts that we can discover the real interests and capabilities of those around us. The more we know about each other, the stronger our team will be, and the richer our community will be. I want us all to continue our lives and take on our future communities with an open mind and an open heart. You never know who you might meet, or what kind of impact that person will have on your life.

Parents, you were right, time does go by quickly. It doesn't feel too long ago that we were just kindergarteners, working together and learning from each other. Back in those days, we were taught the simple rules of life. Be kind. Be thoughtful. Be true to yourself. These short sayings help us to remain inclusive and receptive to others, even if they may seem to be quite different than ourselves. Once we are outside the walls of Newburyport High School, it's up to us to remember these lessons as we open up ourselves up to new people, experiences, and friends.

In closing, Class of 2018, keep the door open. You cannot always predict the opportunities that may come your way. I've learned that if there's something you want to achieve, then dedicate all that you have to accomplish it. There's no harm in failing if you have tried your best. Remember in all that you do, the lessons that you have learned here, even from your days in kindergarten. Kindness, thoughtfulness, and being true to yourself will take you a long way.

With that, I want to congratulate the Newburyport High School Class of 2018 for everything you have done in the past four years to be here today. Take with you all that these extraordinary individuals have taught you, to succeed in the days to come. Thank you Class of 2018, "onward, forward."