

Graduation Remarks

May 28, 2010

St. Andrew's Episcopal School Students, Faculty and Staff, Parents, Alumni, and Friends, and, most especially, members of the Class of 2010 and their parents:

Good morning and welcome to the 46th St. Andrew's Episcopal School Promotion Exercises and the second 8th Grade Graduation.

Between my own education and my career as an educator, I have probably sat through over twenty graduation ceremonies. I must confess that my favorite graduation remarks—and ironically the most memorable ones—have been the shortest.

I will do my best to establish that protocol here in my first graduation remarks as head of St. Andrew's School.

I must, however, take a few moments to invoke head of school privileges and reflect on our accomplishments over the past school year and, most importantly, to laud the four young men and the one very, very brave young woman to my right.

First, our accomplishments this school year. Think, for a moment, about all the change and developments we have experienced together this school year.

We started the school year together with a reconfigured campus, with five new faculty and staff members, a new website, a new lunch program, and a new head of school, from Washington, DC, of all places.

Together, we built a brand new Community Garden; we sanitized our hands and coughed into our elbows during the H1N1 scare; our Middle School students enjoyed overnight learning expeditions at Challenge Country in Mississippi and Kanuga in North Carolina; we celebrated Episcopal School Sunday on a glorious New Orleans fall morning; we carved Pumpkins; we produced first-rate minor and major plays; we hosted the School's first-ever Middle School Dance; we installed new Smart Board technology in three classrooms; we bowled with Peja Stokovic, Chris Paul, and Pierre Thomas; we launched a new Board-level standing Diversity Committee; we sang beautifully and worshipped solemnly at Lessons and Carols; we again bowled, plus danced and bid on auction items, at the Rock 'N Bowl fundraiser; we launched a new series of After School Programs; we explored the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana; we raised funds and supplies for the people of Haiti; we planted marsh grass in the Bayou; we blessed our new court and hosted the inaugural March Madness Tournament and Middle School Fair; we crafted and implemented revised Student Behavior and Discipline Policies and Procedures; we launched the first-ever St. Andrew's Sports and Skills Summer Programs (Coach Burns is currently accepting discounted registration...); we wrote Bare Books; We read, we computed, we analyzed, we discussed, we hypothesized, we prayed, we sang, we danced, we drew, we sculpted, we made mistakes, and we learned from them. In short, we grew together at St. Andrew's this year.

And, oh yes, the Saints won the Super Bowl. Going undefeated, I might add, after every Friday the St. Andrew's students sang "Saints" during Morning Exercises.

And during each one of these remarkable events, we were guided by Xavier, Charles, Isaac, Cameron, and Rachel, the St. Andrew's Fab Five, the Class of 2010.

Graduates, Ms. Sampler knows you better than I, and as you receive your diplomas in just a few short moments, she will offer adjectives that best describe you. I will, however, again invoke head of school privileges and tell each of you what I will remember most about you.

Xavier: I will remember your spirit, your artistic talent, your passion for and skill in athletics, your sense of mischief, and, yes, your hair.

Charles: I will remember your intellect, your maturity, your leadership, your skill in Karate and all things technology, and your dedication to this School and community.

Isaac: I will remember your gentlemanly ways, your talent and your humility, your passion for basketball, though I try to forget the letters U and N and C; your love for St. Andrew's, and your decency.

Cameron: I will remember your leadership as Student Council President, your obsession with basketball, your grace as an athlete representing St. Andrew's, often the finest player on the field or court and also one of the finest sports; your love for St. Andrew's.

Rachel: First and foremost, I will remember your tolerance of these four young men; your grace, your theatrical and artistic talent, your sense of style, and your compassion toward our younger students, who genuinely adore you.

Thank you, Class of 2010, for leading us so beautifully this school year. We wish you the very best in your endeavors in high school and beyond, and we hope you will come back and visit often.

Today we promote 137 students in grades PK through 7; we graduate five 8th graders; and we bid farewell to four departing faculty members.

Betsy Fowler, our 6th grade teacher and History Department Chair, is retiring after nearly two decades of teaching.

Matthew Shelton, our art teacher, soccer coach, and communications coordinator, leaves New Orleans to pursue a Master of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Liz Amoss, our 7th grade teacher and English Department Chair, is semi-retiring, so she may spend more time with her two teenage boys.

And, today, a remarkable 27-year teaching career comes to an end, at least in full-time capacity. Joyce Sampler, our beloved math teacher and 6th and 8th grade teacher is retiring.

Joyce, on behalf of the current students, faculty, and parents of St. Andrew's, in addition to the hundreds of graduates whose lives you have impacted forever, thank you.

Thinking back to those 20-something graduation ceremonies, I have always preferred the term "Commencement" to describe this occasion.

For as much as today marks an end, to the 2009-2010 school year, to the St. Andrew's careers of five students and four faculty members, today also marks the beginning.

Beginning tomorrow, we focus on the 2010-2011 school year. We look forward to welcoming back over 93% of our current families and to welcoming over thirty new families. We look forward to new faculty, a new Middle School Program, renovated facilities, and a total school growth of over 20 students, with a PK-8 enrollment surpassing 160.

Thank you to everyone who supports St. Andrew's—students, faculty, staff, parents and Parents' Club, alumni, and friends—have a wonderful summer and God Bless.

Will you please stand and join me in singing the School's Alma Mater?

