

**Nelson:** Good morning class of 2022. I must say, I am extremely happy to be speaking in front of everyone here at the farm show complex, as COVID-19 had a number of us wondering what the future would entail.

I am sure that we all remember our initial reactions to distance learning in the spring of sophomore year. For myself, I remember being so happy to be in the comfort of my own home, relaxing with the mute button on and enjoying the lightened workload. We did not have to worry about people walking slowly in the hallways, nor did we have to wake up as early for class.

I will admit, however, that I only enjoyed the first month or two of virtual learning. I know that many of us, including myself, were under the impression that society would shortly return to normal, and that distance learning would be a short-term break that allowed us to relax. Fast forward several months into the beginning of junior year, and there we were, still doing Zoom classes. Different strands of COVID-19 were brought up to our attention, keeping us on our toes, yet away from each other. Since few people were willing to speak up, let alone have their camera on, the silence of Zoom classes felt loud.

Our workload started to ramp back up to normal as well, since we must continue to move on, no matter the circumstance.

“We must continue to move on, no matter the circumstance.” Are we allowed to have breaks and time off? Of course we are, but at the end of the day, we, as humans, are beings of change. We have this incredible ability to adapt to situations that are significantly less than ideal. With this being said, we certainly did move on. We made it through the tedious Zoom classes. We learned our curriculum, despite it being harder to receive help from those around us. We survived the most difficult period of

learning that we have ever had to go through in our educational careers.

To that, I commend each and every one of you sitting here today. I commend you all for sticking around and putting the effort in until we could get back to a normal school year. Is COVID gone? No, but we are back in school. We are one cohesive group, free of being split by last name. We can see the faces of our peers, rather than just their foreheads. We can go back to supporting our various athletes at their games, we can listen to the concerts that our music department has to offer, we can watch our peers perform in the musical, we can admire the art and projects at Living Arts, and we

were able to go back and dance at a normal prom!

Class of 2022, at this moment, I ask that you all give yourselves a round of applause for being able to withstand this pandemic, and for making it back to a normal school year.

<pause>

Now, none of this would have been possible without the hard work that our administrators and staff put in to help create a better learning environment. It is easy to say that distance learning was difficult for us as students, but we can not forget that it was difficult for our teachers too. The passion that they have in a classroom environment does not translate as well to a Zoom call, but they still

continued on. They may not have seen eighty percent of their students' faces, but they learned to take attendance by seeing our ceiling fans and home decor, and they carried through, continuing to teach as best as they could. Regardless of how tech-savvy they were, they did their best to find solutions to online problems because their goal is to help us learn.

Now, when you walk out these doors today, life is going to be different. Regardless of your future plans, new responsibilities will emerge, and you may not even know how to deal with some of these problems. I know, especially for myself, procrastination is a dangerous habit. COVID-19

certainly did not help with that. We became used to working from home, staying mostly inactive around the house, and not worrying what pants we had on since it would not show in Zoom.

Despite all of this, times continue to change, and we must continue to change with them. We must move forward, seeking to be the best version of ourselves. Everyone's best version of themselves will be different, but the most important thing you can do is to remember who you are and be proud of who you have become. No approach to life after you walk out of these doors is wrong, but it would be wrong to compare your best self to others, considering that

you don't know what struggles lie beyond your perception of their "best life."

At the end of the day, you will have your own sacrifices to make, and I can not help you decide what is best for you. All that I can do today is tell you that life may be harder, but the effort you put into becoming the best version of yourself will pay off. You may be much busier with life, but that only makes you appreciate your free time more.

I wish you all the best of luck out there. Thank you for your time.



Mention ceiling fans and foreheads

Things to work in:

- fun things/spirit days
- recognize military, maybe stand up (syd?)
- people going into the workforce (soloman?)
- musical/plays

Good morning everyone, and welcome to the commencement ceremony. I am honored to stand here as Cedar Cliff's salutatorian as we finish off our high school experience. To be completely honest, that experience consisted of a very strange four years. Don't get me wrong; I thoroughly enjoyed it, but I can't say that we have ever had one school year that resembled any of the other three.

For example, during freshman year, everyone took time to adjust to high school. We began to get a feel for the layout of the school, we saw new faces all around the building, we (insert more memories?).

Sophomore year was an interesting one. Just as we were getting comfortable with all of the new experiences freshman year had to offer, COVID-19 had given us just a bit more to get used to. I'm sure that I don't have to remind you about what it was like to be on Zooms for the first time. I remember enjoying it for the first month or so, but I also know that a number of us were tired of it after the first month or so.

(LOOK AT SENIOR INDEX FOR MEMORY IDEAS)