

Good morning, Cedar Cliff,

It's hard to believe we've finally made it, everyone. It's an honor and a privilege to be here. Going to high school these past few years... has certainly been a struggle. We've all followed really unique paths throughout our time at Cedar Cliff, but now we've managed to land here, together. I think for that, all of us—not just the students, but our families, teachers, staff, and administrators, who've supported us every step of the way—deserve a round of applause as we close out this school year.

Pause

Our time in high school has been a time of change. There's huge things I can point out, like the pandemic. COVID hit us in the middle of tenth grade, we survived it, now it's (hopefully) done with, and we've just finished the first normal spring semester since 2020. That's a lot.

There's also been a lot of little changes that some of you may not have noticed at all. We have chickens and an Aquaponics lab! There are gym classes now that teach archery and mountain biking. Now we have a library full of really comfy little couches for us to relax in, instead of the computer banks that filled it in freshman year.

This year we had so many spirit weeks. We learned coolers and kayaks serve as backpacks. Many of you revealed your onesie pajamas. Mr. Gensler definitely has closet full of costumes for all occasions. One spirit week even centered entirely around the wonderful Mrs. Lingle's birthday. *gesture* Overall, it's fair to say we had opportunities to show spirit and to move beyond our post-Covid slump.

All of these changes at Cedar Cliff tell us something, from henhouses to spirit weeks to COVID: that we can prosper no matter what the future holds for us. We were able to successfully host our Homecoming, our Prom, our Mini-Thon, our induction ceremonies and award nights, despite all of the chaos we've had to deal with these past

few years. The Golden Corral cheered on both the girls and boys basketball teams during their winning seasons before sold out crowds. We proved that we can learn and grow, as individuals and as a community, even during some of the most stressful times of our lives.

Soon we'll all split off and go our separate ways, out into the world. We'll be bombarded with new experiences. Opportunities to explore, and lessons to learn. Some of us will stick to set tracks; some of us have already dedicated our time to careers by learning technology and advanced skills through vo-tech programs and internships. For those even thinking about serving our country through military service, you have our deepest appreciation. In fact, please join me in a round of

applause for those who will be joining the workforce and for those who will be defending our country.

<pause for applause>

Some will be choosing the lower student debt route of community college and staying close to home. Some will be venturing across the country for the school of their dreams. That's ALL amazing! Others might change their minds and follow less predictable routes. That's great too. Class of 2022, it's important that we recognize this now, because we should believe in ourselves. It's okay to walk through this arena, celebrate with your family, and **spread arm(s)** go out into the world, and *not be sure*. As J. R. R. Tolkien once said, "Not all those who wander are lost."

Whatever you do, remember that. Whatever you do, wherever you *go*, believe in yourselves. Follow every path that calls to you, so that you live without leaving any regrets behind. Life won't be easy. Things happen; you might not have total control over wherever you end up. But now, my fellow graduating seniors, it's time to take our lives into our own hands, and trust in ourselves.

Thank you.