

Good evening. I stand up here this evening honored to have been selected as one of this year's scholar leaders.

Tonight marks a turning point in each of our lives. We have spent the past three years together and now, we will be moving on. Not all of us will be moving on to Montville High, as some of you have chosen to start the new chapter of your lives at Grasso Tech, Norwich Tech, Marine Science, NFA, or St. Bernard's. This evening marks the last time we will all be together. As we prepare to go our separate ways, I would like to leave you all with a few lessons I've learned throughout my 3 years at Tyl Middle School.

The first one is to be thankful. Who would have thought that as we arrived on March 12th, that that was going to be our final time walking through the halls of Tyl Middle School. Not returning meant that many events, such as the Washington, D.C. trip, our semi-formal dance, the high meadows field trip, and yearbook signing that we were looking forward to were memories never to be made. However, we still have plenty of wonderful memories from this year to be thankful for. To name a few, our cross country and basketball pep rallies, student/staff basketball game, and the snowball dance. We can also be thankful for our families. During the past three years and most recently, the past three months, we have been presented with a lot of ups and downs and we persevered through them by having our families in our corner, supporting us along the way. Another support system to be thankful for are our teachers. It is easy to take them for granted, but they have also been in our corner challenging and supporting us in the classroom and during distance learning. I will always be thankful for all of the support they provided me throughout my time here.

The next lesson is to always believe in yourself. Everyone here is unique and will take on different paths, lifestyles, and obstacles to reach success. It is guaranteed that we will have failures along the way, but take those moments to regroup, try harder, and find a different approach. There will be moments when it feels like everything and everyone is against you. Maybe you fail a test, or don't make the team, or get into a fight with a friend. Embrace those moments and keep pushing forward. Be your own cheerleader. Persevere, encourage yourself to do better, try harder, and work problems out. Don't give up. Always believe in yourself.

And finally, a third lesson is to be resilient. The last few months have really shown me what it means to be resilient, to be able to recover from setbacks and difficulties and come out a stronger person. Knowing that we were going to end our 8th grade year independently is not what most of us wanted. We were all faced with a new way of learning which came with stresses of many levels. I used to wake up excited to go to school to see my friends and interact with teachers. That was quickly replaced with the dreadful feeling of having to face hours of isolated learning without my friends and teachers. But despite being thrown this obstacle, I did not let it affect my work ethic. I

still woke up early, logged into my laptop, and organized and completed my work. However, during the day I was able to facetime friends, check instagram and learn a new tiktok here or there, which i couldn't have done if my phone was in my locker.

Although we feel as though we didn't get to properly finish our eighth grade year, it was still amazing and I'm glad we were able to have a promotion. As much fun as middle school has been, now it is time for us to start something new, high school. From our first day as freshmen, there will be plenty of opportunities for everyone to make the next four years the best that they can be. So I challenge you to be thankful for something every day, always believe in yourself, and find a way to be resilient even when everything feels like it is going wrong. As we move into high school, we will continue to grow older, and become more responsible and independent. We all can go into high school prepared to make our future the best that it can be. I would like to extend a big congratulations to all of my classmates.

Thank you.