

Good evening Tyl staff, families, and fellow classmates. My name is Zachary Kobyluck. I am truly honored to be selected for such a prestigious award. Looking back to when I was just a sixth grader, I'm sure most of you can relate to how overwhelming and intimidating it felt the first day we walked through the doors at Tyl as middle schoolers, and now here I am representing our 8th grade class giving this speech during our promotion ceremony. I feel blessed and thankful to have spent 3 years at this amazing school with all of you. The memories we as a class have made are unforgettable, like during the pep rallies, assemblies, outdoor activities, field trips, and just little every day moments with our peers. The irreplaceable bonds with friends were formed and strengthened during our journeys through Tyl. This one-of-a-kind learning experience led by compassionate and knowledgeable teachers and administrators has left a huge, positive impact on our education and our character.

Now let's talk about right now. Don't you think it's a little weird how our parents, for years, have been yelling at us to get off our phones and other devices to go out and enjoy the "real world", but now they are begging us to go on our devices to socialize, be productive and, well, let's be honest, get us away from them?! Well if that isn't 2020, I don't know what is! Technology has made life a lot easier, and it has especially been a huge help amidst this COVID-19 crisis. I know I will never take my cell phone that is in my pocket right now for granted ever again!

This year has brought along many new challenges and experiences for all of us. First of all, I bet none of you have ever done school online from home, with our parents shifting to the “teacher” role. Speaking of being home---how is everyone else doing in quarantine? I am doing wonderful, especially because I had to write a speech to say in front of an audience I don’t even get to see. And, what has been SUPER fun, I am also stuck at home with my lovely, annoying family when I could’ve been with all of my classmates and having fun. We, don’t lie, have definitely wished that we didn’t have to go to school many times, but now that this is happening, we are begging to escape from this drought of social interaction and now really wish to actually go to school! A quote from a “very famous” person, my dad: “Be careful what you wish for because it just might come true.” I think that about sums up our situation! Speaking of my dad, my parents have been a huge help and motivation for my success in school. Without my dad’s constant exhausting-er- *inspirational* lectures and my mom’s words of encouragement, aka, yelling, I don’t think I would be where I am now. But seriously, they have been a huge loving support.

Furthermore, quarantine has created nothing but frustration for many of us. What was once easy, like sitting in a classroom to learn, and seeing friends almost daily, has become more difficult and, honestly, boring. No offense to our teachers because they are trying their best. Teachers and students are facing many hardships with this change, and it’s been a struggle to stay engaged. And,

sometimes sacrifices must be made and things must be missed for the greater good.

Although we are ending our middle school experience in a way that seems surreal, we can still dream and look ahead to our futures. Even though many of us are going to different schools, some away from our peers, we have all been prepared in the same way and in the same place. All we can do is reflect on the great times and fun we've shared with others along with all of the hard work we've put in at this building we've called home for the past 3 years. After school clubs, like drama, basketball, student council, robotics, and many more have all added to our memories of Tyl. Entertaining experiences, like watching the staff play a basketball game against the students, will always be remembered.

Now for a positive thought, here is one word that is driving us to do things: hope. Fellow classmates, we have all held on to the hope that everything will get back to normal soon. In the past, we've all been hopeful for something, whether it be to receive a good grade on a test, win a sports game, or to get a part in the school play, and it's always kept us motivated to do our best. I'm asking all of you right now, just have a little hope. When times are tough, hope is all you need to get through it. Hellen Keller once said, "Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible." Speaking of hope, I sure hope that I can get some time away from my house soon because it is driving me crazy being trapped in it!

This grade, the class of 2024, is prepared for anything! I mean, we've had our whole year turned upside down and we are dealing and adapting to the unexpected, so I think that speaks wonders about us. I am pretty nervous about going to high school, but I bet many of you feel the same way. Our class of 2024 has been through so much together, like one giant team. And I think we are ready for the big leagues. Bring it on, high school!

I want to take a brief moment to thank the teachers for providing an excellent education for us students. I want to thank the principal, Mrs. Dix, for leading our school and making sure we will be successful, along with vice principal, Mr. Daly. I want to thank our counselor, Mrs. San Souci, for being there for everyone and making us all feel safe and comfortable in school. Also, special thanks to the parents of everyone, for supporting us students and guiding us to success, for an overall great Leonard J. Tyl Middle School experience. I especially want to send thanks to my family for always being there for me.

Most importantly, I want to give thanks to my classmates, for hanging in there together through everything and making this the best and most rewarding middle school experience I could ever ask for. Best of luck in high school to all of you, I really mean it. For closing words, I would like to end with a quote from someone most of you should know, Dr. Seuss. This one's from "Oh The Places You'll Go!": "Kid, you'll move mountains! So... be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray or Mordecai Ali Van Allen O'Shea, you're off to Great Places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... *get on your way!*"

So, I am concluding that we are all ready for our journey to get to our mountains and successes. However high your mountain is, depends on how high you choose to climb. Good luck! Thank you!