

Michael Jordan once said that "Being nervous isn't bad. It just means that something important is happening." Now either he is referring to the importance of the flash flood that I'm going to cause in here as a result of my excessive palm and back sweat, or the importance of standing in front of you all today as I talk about the last 4 years at MVDHS. Whatever the case, I want to start by saying that even though I am quite nervous to be speaking to you all, it is still an absolute honour to represent the entire graduating class of 2017-2018 here tonight.

So to start, I would just like to say a huge thank you to all the fantastic teachers, principals, and staff on behalf of all the students. I would also like to acknowledge all the parents, grandparents, siblings, and others who are here to see their friends and family members graduate, and take their first big step into adulthood. Thank you for supporting us all the way through, and shaping us into young, professional adults. The things we have learned from you amazing people cannot be described in words, and without you guys we wouldn't be where we are today.

This may sound odd to you all, but through these last four years at Madawaska Valley District High School, I really learned how to B.R.A.P. No, I don't mean the kind of brap that you do when there's a foot and a half of fresh snow on the ground, or the brap that you hear from the hallway as you're trying to learn about parabolas, but the B.R.A.P. that is an acronym for everything I ever learned about what it meant to be a part of this school. Through "Being respectful", "Reaching for our goals", "Asserting our knowledge and opinion", and "Providing assistance to our peers", BRAPing has come into our school, and changed who we all are.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wanted to be valedictorian, not because of the cool name and label associated with it, but because I feel like I am a product of the excellent community, BRAPing, and family feel that MVDHS is notorious for. When I say "family feel", I don't mean the fact the we are all related to at least 3 other graduates somehow, even if it's through our cousin's-parents-half-siblings-grandparents-sister, but because of the closeness that we all demonstrate on a daily basis... some of us more than others *cough* *Nick and Eric*. But seriously, witnessing friends become family has been one of the coolest things about these last high school years. The way the students and teachers interact here is something that is entirely unique, and it is incredible that we have several people here continuously offering support.

Now I don't know about you guys, but it feels as though these last few years have flown by. It feels as though it was only a couple months ago when our grade 9 selves were all loaded into the gym, and essentially forced to play huckle buckle together. As uncomfortable as we all were by being forced to go "butt-to-butt" or "toe-to-forehead" with people we had never met, it truly was only the beginning of an incredible journey. As the years progressed, the relationships that we built on that day of grade 9 orientation progressed also. Through building gingerbread houses with our link crew groups, carving pumpkins, or walking the halls in feathers and pirate swords, we truly were given the opportunity to find the people that we wanted to spend the next four years with. In most cases, it showed us there were other people here that were just as nervous, excited, or uncomfortable with the new beginning as we were.

Grade 10 and 11 seemed like one giant year for me. Friends grew closer, and we all started to become one big family. It became tradition for some of us to hang around after school to offer moral support at the volleyball and soccer games, or sit in the back parking lot and see who's truck could rev the loudest or climb the highest snowbank, or for others to head to the weight room and repeatedly lift stuff... then spend 20 minutes flexing in the mirror and snapchatting every pose to preetttty much every girl on your friends list. I'm pretty sure I will always hear Alix's fake boom voice ringing in the back of my head saying: "go hop on a bike and do cardio for once" to all the people working out chest... Every. Single. Day.

All the time we had started to spend together was definitely bringing us closer, and making us significantly more comfortable with each other. There were even several attempts to call flocks of ducks into the hallways.... meanwhile the only thing that managed to fly was a lone cupcake through the caf... We won't bring that day up.

MV has been the place for us all to grow up together, and learn new things, and aside from the academics that we were taught, or the sports and clubs we participated in, we each picked up a couple of extra things along the way. I have many personal fond memories of my own, going way back to the notorious kung-fu kick when Daniel and I were "fighting" in the sand pit... man the karate kid would be proud. Or the time that um... an inflatable male genitalia was spotted trekking down the hall, that also won't be spoken about tonight. Or all the times that when it was time to present our songs in music class, and they ended up being complete trash because we had learned how to effectively procrastinate and be irresponsible (we weren't BRAPing yet). I'm also pretty confident I witnessed several flying boards in wood tech... Saws are great when you know how to use them!

But in this last year of high school especially, I feel as though we all became closer than ever before. Even though this year went by the fastest, it was the year of friendship and new beginnings. Through the times at the "coffee shop" on spare, which took place right over there [point to the corner], all the time we spent in student success getting that one last assignment in to ensure we passed high school, or by being repeatedly asked by Ms. Visneskie "where are you supposed to be right now", we were all brought closer than ever before.

It truly is crazy how quickly time has passed. We've made it through elementary school, Klawitter has shoved us through high school (and the principals have definitely ENSURED that we leave), and now we're about to take one of the biggest, most memorable steps of our lives. Similar to that cupcake soaring through the caf that one day, now it's our turn to fly. It's time for us leave the nests of our parents as we pursue a higher education, find work, or begin our apprenticeships. For some of us it might mean a year off for travel or for family, or to return here to have another great year surrounded by excellent students and staff. But regardless of where we end up, who we meet, or what we choose to forget, I hope everyone makes the absolute best of it, and always remembers where they came from, because I know that I will forever remember you all, and the amazing times we had together.

I would also just like to take a quick moment while I am up here to say a special thanks to my parents. I could have never have made it through high school without you guys. Thank you for your continuous support, and teaching me that I can always go further. Oh, and graduates, remember to continue BRAPing with each new door that opens in your life.

Congratulations everyone, we did it!

Thank you.