

2020 Virtual Graduation Speech

Waterloo Community Schools

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Please summarize your purpose & goal for creating this piece:

This graduation speech was written to honor our high school seniors and lift their spirits upon their virtual graduation.

Target Audience(s)

The main target audience is of course seniors and their families but it also includes internal and external customers including: staff, students, community, parents/guardians and alumni as it was posted on social media.

Describe your approach to this project: highlight your process and strategies used in implementing your ideas, and explain how resources were used to execute your ideas.

To honor our high school graduates this year, we spent many hours putting together a virtual graduation video. This required four of our full-time staff, working from home, finding graduate photos, proofing names and double-checking graduation lists. We offered the option of students providing their own senior photos instead of the school Lifetouch photos. It came down to the wire of when the video was promised to be released which was the original date for each high school's graduation. This speech is so heartfelt with the hopes of giving each graduate the sense of pride and accomplishment in a year full of disappointments.

How did you evaluate the success of this entry, and what were the metrics/feedback you gathered (or results)?

The video was posted on our YouTube channel, cable channel, District Facebook page, Twitter account and District website. It was posted with a variety of other photos taken during the videotaping and received lots of likes and shares!

Parents and students loved the video as we attempted to make their graduation as special as we could with Covid restrictions. We wanted to make sure they at least had a virtual graduation as so many milestones had been taken away from them this past year. This video received 4,522 views on YouTube, 2,904 people reached and 249 engagements.

You can find the speech below.

2020 Graduation Speech

Hello seniors, staff, family and friends of the Class of 2020! I'm Dr Jane Lindaman, the Waterloo Schools superintendent, and I am honored to have the opportunity to address all of you virtually as you reach the major milestone of your high school graduation. Never could I have imagined this past fall when you embarked on your last year with our district and the home stretch of your K-12 journey that it would end this way. No one wanted it to end this way, and certainly we have to acknowledge the loss and sadness many, if not all, of are experiencing along with your parents and loved ones. When you walked out of high school for Spring Break, you did not realize you were walking away from all of the things you've come to expect were a given. Like being able to spend time every weekday with your teachers and classmates--in person. Having the chance to participate in after-school clubs, activities, athletics, fine arts and music--all with your friends and teammates by your side.

Though all of these once guaranteed opportunities were at once taken away, you and your peers rallied to finish strong and create new memories in creative and innovative ways. For example, students at Expo took part in Leader in Me training online, East students performed a virtual play that was streamed live on Facebook and West students created an Instagram account to profile seniors. I am proud of how our Class of 2020 has taken on the challenge of dealing with the unexpected times ten. The ways in which you have been balancing assignments, for many of you college courses, along with work and family responsibilities. No one said your senior year would be easy, but what you've had to take on is beyond what any of us expected.

Maya Angelou, the American author and civil rights activist once said, "I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it." This is the challenge I would like you to consider as you end your high school career. Don't let this situation, this unexpected and ultimately temporary shutdown, reduce you. Don't let it crush your spirit and cause you to abandon hope for your future. In mid-March a pause button of sorts was pressed on your lives. But today I am asking you to proudly press play when the time is right to resume all of the goal-setting and dream chasing laid out before you.

Perhaps the word resilience best describes the Class of 2020, as you and your fellow graduates have experienced it beyond compare. No other class has endured such an unusual circumstance of isolation and canceled plans all at once. But I would argue that this time in your lives, at such a pivotal moment in your lives, actually sets you apart. You and your peers will be remembered as the class who did not let a global pandemic cancel your future. In fact, I believe going through this in such an abrupt and unforeseen way will actually position you to work harder and smarter in the years to come to achieve. You will face obstacles in your personal and professional lives

differently now that you've survived and thrived within this one.

Seniors, you are what we call digital natives. Children born into a world where advanced technology and dependence on devices have become the norm. You were just two-years-old when Facebook started and only three when YouTube launched. Let's face it--in a world now dependent on virtual engagement and technical know-how, this gives you the upper hand. Many of us are relying on you to be the future innovators and collaborators to shift our economy and existence into an enhanced digital experience--and let's be honest, we need you to show us how to use all the features on our smartphones! My final thought for you is to use this advantage. Pursue the careers and training options set before you that didn't even exist five years ago. Whether we embrace it or not, we are all part of a new age of industry and commerce borne out of the necessity to diversify and ultimately survive. And I have no doubt you are poised to be the future leaders that can accept the challenge to help yourselves and those around you succeed. Congratulations to the Class of 2020!

