

The Sage School  
2009 Graduation Remarks  
By Timothy S. Monroe, Head of School  
June 12, 2009, 9:00 a.m.

Last week at Morning Meeting we talked about the meaning of the word, Commencement. We talked about the fact that, while our 8th graders are today ending their time as students at Sage, they are also Commencing a new chapter in their lives, with new experiences, new places, new people.

To many, leaving Middle School and entering Secondary School means the beginning of much more freedom, independence, and autonomy, and the chance to express even more individuality.

This can certainly be true.

However, the exact meaning and purpose of independence--of freedom itself—is open for interpretation.

Jake Dresden, the retiring Head of Concord Academy, said the following several years ago at a meeting at his school:

A common misconception about independence is that it confers upon us a freedom to follow our own will.....

What we can do individually in a community is bound and described by the needs of the others in the group. Whether we are in a cast of a play, on a team, or part of the faculty and staff, we must all keep in mind that our freedom to choose our way comes as a result of the grace and acceptance of others.

I think Mr. Dresden's words carry powerful meaning for us as a school and for this class of graduates.

Sage is indeed, a community of individuals.

And while we work hard to allow everyone to follow his or her own will as much as possible, we also must be sensitive to and responsible for each other.

No one could reasonably argue that this class is not full of strong and distinct personalities. They are a diverse group with diverse strengths, interests, and passions.

I want to applaud this year's graduating class for so masterfully balancing their unique identities and needs with those of the rest of the community. For being wholly themselves ...while also functioning well as a team, as a group, as a family.

As you leave here today, I hope that you will remember the wonderful way in which you came together as individuals. Like an orchestra, you managed to blend your individual talents into something new and beautiful.

You have been yourselves, but remained together. I have no doubt that this is what will help you the most as you move on to tackle the next challenge.

Wherever you are going I hope that you will feel free to be yourself, to be just who you want to be. But at the same time, I hope that you have learned that your ability to express that freedom, that individuality, is wholly dependent As Mr. Dresden said, on the “grace and acceptance of others.”

It is customary at Sage for the Head of School to give the departing eighth graders a gift.

This year, each of the graduates will be given a book of poems by Langston Hughes.

Born in 1902, Hughes was a prolific writer of both poetry and prose. He was a key figure in the African American artistic movement known as The Harlem Renaissance.

The title of the book, and of the very first poem, is The Dream Keeper. It is a very brief but very powerful verse.

Bring me all of your dreams,  
You dreamers,  
Bring me all of your  
Heart melodies  
That I may wrap them  
In a blue-cloud cloth  
Away from the too rough fingers  
Of the world.

We Parents wish that we could protect our children’s dreams. We all wish that we could wrap their dreams in that “blue-cloud cloth” safe from the “too rough fingers of the world.”

While we may wish this, and while we may strive to provide this safety—this cushion from the world—we know we can’t, we know our powers of protection go only so far.

I believe that what is best is for these young people, these wonderful young men and women, is that they develop the power and the freedom to cultivate, nurture and protect their own dreams, to play and dance to their very own “Heart melodies.”

I also believe that perhaps the best place for young people to grow and nurture their dreams.....is in school.

School is often the very first place that children spend time without their parents. It is often the very first place that children form thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and understandings that are not

necessarily connected to or influenced by their parents. It is often the very first place they develop important relationships with people outside their families.

When I read this poem now, and I imagine its point of view, the voice I hear is that of a Sage teacher.

Parents entrust their children to us and those children bring us their dreams. It is our duty then to help them imagine those dreams, to build them up, to grow them strong, to develop their own means of keeping them safe.

Well,.....here are some dreamers in front of you. They are musicians and artists, athletes and mathletes, readers and writers, singers and scientists, actors and dancers, thinkers and wonderers, daughters and sons, brothers and sisters, family.....and friends. They are a community of dreamers.

They came to Sage with their dreams, and made new ones while here. It is my most fervent hope that they leave today with those dreams intact and stronger than ever. It is my fondest wish that what we have given them here will suffice.

I know that they have learned much and grown well and that they now have the confidence, the skills, the understandings, .....the genius....to weave their own "blue-cloud cloth" in which to wrap their dreams.

To The Sage School Class of 2009—I thank you all for your unique talents, your unique gifts, your unique identities. Thank you for sharing all that you are with each other and with all of us.

Congratulations---and please.....whatever you do, wherever you go.....Keep Your Dreams.