

Fifth Grade Closing Ceremony
Closing Remarks- June 8, 2017
Gail Hutton

It gives me such great pleasure to celebrate this special occasion with you today, and to share some thoughts with you and your family and guests. One of my hobbies is collecting quote books--books of quotations. I have more than I care to admit, but I read them like novels. What I didn't realize until I started thinking about what I was going to say to you today, is that I have sayings....yes, you could call them quotations--words of wisdom? Possibly...but words that were consistently said in my classroom over the years and ones that many of you will remember. Robert Fulghum wrote a book entitled *All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten*. Using his idea, I thought I would offer 10 key quotes that you can refer back to for really....the rest of your life. For those of you who were not in my First grade class, don't worry...as I review these all important rules, I will rephrase them in that more mature, sophisticated Middle School language... As a matter of fact....these lessons will serve you throughout Middle School, Upper School, and adulthood.

1. Stay with your partner- in other words, don't try to go it alone. Surround yourself with people who support you, challenge you, and make you laugh. Be open to their points of view. It will often be the case that they have better ideas than you do.
2. You won't get in trouble if you tell the truth. Ok, this is important...As you navigate your way through Middle School you are going to confront this rule more times than you may think. Take my word for it, secrets and lies end relationships—one lie is enough to question all truths. Trust is broken and hard to repair. Tell the truth, it may hurt for a short time....but a lie will hurt forever.
3. Crossed fingers do not nullify a promise. A promise is a promise. Your word is important, and if you make a commitment to someone or something, stick with it. Don't cancel a babysitting job because your friends just invited you to a party. Starting something is easy, but seeing it through and finishing it can be the greatest hurdle. Be reliable and be tenacious.
4. You have to share...except your sneeze, then do "the dab." Ok, in Lower School this means you have to share your toys, your pencils, your crayons, and maybe sometimes if no one is looking....your lunch. Beyond Lower School this means sharing your ideas--in a way that respects and considers the opinions and beliefs of others. Meaningful dialogue is sharing at its best--it is listening with empathy, it is building understandings, it is finding common ground, it is exploring new perspectives, it is suspending judgement, it is listening deeply, it is setting a purpose or direction together. Share--share your things yes with a generous spirit, share your ideas with genuine heart.
5. Always ask yourself..."If Janie ate worms, would I eat worms? Ok--I needed to get one Core

Value in here...be authentic, be yourself. We have talked about this a lot since we introduced the Core Values a few short years ago. But Middle School and beyond will test this worm theory to the limit. Trust me, your parents are already gearing up for this one. Find your own voice-- stay true to who you are. Being yourself is scary, it means risking rejection. Take my advice and take the risk. You are only losing yourself to someone who doesn't really care about losing you. Be brave, and do what is right. To quote Ellen Degeneres, "Follow your passion. Stay true to yourself. Never follow someone else's path unless you're in the woods and you're lost and you see a path. By all means, you should follow that."

6. Don't yuk someone's yum--Ok, this came from lunchroom behavior, whereby someone would sneer or make a disgusting face at the delicacy of a fellow classmate. Unthinkable right? Well, it happened, and often enough we had to invoke the yuk/yum rule. What this means is hold your judgement--how do you do this?

1. Focus on the positive--remember judgements are negative
2. Stop judging yourself (focus on the positive aspects of you, and you will focus on the positive aspects of others)
3. Focus on yourself--don't worry about what others are doing, wearing or possessing
4. Remember how it feels-- think about the feelings of others

7. Remember : if you don't know the answer to a question....say I don't know, "I'll get back to you on that"

If the 5th grade Capstone Project taught you anything, it taught you how to say you don't know. Your teachers cued you on this. In the event you are asked a question other than "why did you choose this topic" and you do not know the answer, simply reply..."I don't know, I'll get back to you on that." This is extremely important to remember. You do not have to have all the answers--Google does. You just need to know how to find the answers and how to use the information. You are smart and well educated, but it is OK to say "I don't know, I'll have to get back to you on that." This will be useful to you when you are in college and your parents ask you why you are already short on cash. You simply reply, "I don't know, I'll have to get back to you on that."

8. No butting in line- This was a huge rule in First grade. I would put this one pretty much at the top. Let me tell you, if someone butt in line boy, I knew it. Nothing seem to upset the pleasant, idyllic First grade atmosphere more. OK- so how does this carry us into the teen years and beyond? It means wait your turn, be patient. You do not have to knock your friend over to get to something before she does. It is about kindness, consideration and compassion. You do not have to have the latest/greatest electronic device, "it-gadget", or article of clothing the nano-second it comes on the market. It is about waiting, saving, and receiving with honest gratitude and appreciation for what it is you have. Take it from me, your success in life will be greatly enhanced if you can learn to practice patience and self-control. The antidote for impatience is generosity. When you are feeling impatient, let someone go ahead of you in the lunch line, donate the clothes that you no longer wear to those in need, or maybe even volunteer to help

those who are disabled and need assistance. You will find generosity much more rewarding than getting somewhere or something first.

9. You get what you get and you don't get upset. We said this most often when passing out fruit flavored popsicles. It never failed that just when you ran out of grape--the next person in line wanted grape. That's when "you get what you get" was invoked. This again is a nugget of wisdom for the ages. I guarantee you that when you are about to explode because your mom and dad tell you that you are getting the 2009 family mini-van for your very own, it's going to come in handy. Joking aside, it is important to learn how to deal with not always getting exactly what you want or expect. Dealing with disappointment and discouragement isn't easy, but I do offer this advice. When you are feeling disappointed ask yourself two questions: 1. What can I learn from this? and 2. What is it that I am trusting in to make me happy? Chances are, by reflecting on these, you will pull out of your disappointment a stronger and wiser person.

10. When you finish your work, read a book. There is the "Golden Rule" and for me this is the Silver Rule. When you have an extra minute or two--read. As you enter Middle School and beyond, there are going to be so many demands on your time. You may occasionally feel like you have no spare time. You may be tempted to spend that precious time on your phone or computer or watching Netflix, but I am advising you to strike a balance. Reading gives life like no other activity. It gives your brain a different kind of work-out from watching TV or texting a friend. Your brain is undergoing another growth spurt--one that rivals the growth it experienced in infancy. Reading can help you to manage the emotional ups and downs that you are going through--simply because your limbic system (the part of the brain that regulates heart rate, blood sugar levels, emotions, and memory formation) is experiencing tremendous change at this point in your physical development. How? Well, reading about someone who met challenges or obstacles and overcame them can serve as a model or motivator for you. Stories can change your view of the world or perspective. It can help strengthen your ability to walk in the shoes of another--it can build empathy. Reading reduces stress, it actually reduces the output of the stress hormone, cortisol. This can come in handy after you have failed an algebra test. Reading builds stamina--that is focus and concentration that will help you achieve academically and athletically. Finally, reading helps in almost every area of intelligence. According to a work entitled *What Reading Does for the Mind* those that read have higher GPA's, higher intelligence and higher knowledge than those who don't. In simple terms--it makes you smarter, and as you approach my age, you'll be happy to know that it also keeps you sharp as you age. Reading is an outstanding way to inform, educate and inspire. It is an outstanding way to get you where you want to go.

So there you have the 10 Tenets of Wisdom from your days in the Lower School. Tuck them into the recesses of your mind--that doesn't mean put your mind into recess. It means to put them in a place where you can easily retrieve them. I guarantee, you will refer back to them more

than you can imagine.

To end, I would like to read to you a quote one of the books in my "Quote Book Collection". It is from one of my favorite authors, Dr. Seuss. It is from his book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*.

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes

You can steer yourself any direction you choose.

You're on your own. And you know what you know.

And YOU are the [girl] who'll decide where to go.

Congratulations to the class of 2024!