

It is a tremendous honor to be here and celebrate the commencement of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2009. As a member of the “great class of 88” (yes, that’s what we called ourselves and I’m that old) I remember the feeling of accomplishment, the carefully selected white dress, the nervousness of leaving classmates, the excitement of starting high school..... all on this day. But for the present let’s focus on the moment. There can be no more joy than living in the moment and enjoying how far you have come.

In the words of the late Muppet artist, Jim Henson, creator of Miss Piggy, Kermit the Frog and Sesame Street:

**“Working together is like being part of a wheel. When the wheel is moving, you don’t see the individual spokes.”**

You have been an amazing group of young people who have had to work together to meet the goal of graduation. If one of the spokes breaks, then the bike cannot arrive at the destination. You have managed to keep all the spokes in place and the wheel going....and now, you arrive at the end!

**Graduation!**

**Congratulations!**

I work with many children as a child clinical psychologist in Chicago. Having the backing of **Our** Lexington School helped me to be prepared for the future both emotionally and academically.

In addressing your class on this wonderful day, I also want to address the teachers who helped you arrive at this point. They also represent important spokes in the wheel which has helped you arrive at your destination. I can only speak from my own experience at TLS.

Mrs. Meekins was my first experience with the Lexington School as a first grader....I remember the thrill of making Santa Claus with cotton balls to bring home to my mom.

Mr. Prichtett. With his candy wreath every Christmas.

Ms. Eames drilled vocabulary words into my head (oh my goodness....the Friday vocab tests); She was also my brother’s first teacher (as a 3-year-old) and his last teacher as a 9th grader.

Mrs. Foster did wonders with math and “busy beads.”.....(this was a girls only project where classmates, teachers and parents lined up to buy our bead bracelets!.....as a grown up I realize that it was all about learning math.)

Mrs. Bell challenged us with the “math team.”...sometimes challenging the girls in the group to “beat the boys.”

Madame Mills and Madame Charron did the same with French...”Les Grande Concourse” prep and a wonderful trip to France.

Mr. Hardisty made science interesting and fun...always with a smile and sense of humor.

Ms. Cowling made history come live....she taught us how to take notes properly which followed into great college note taking.

Ms. Anderson inspired us in music and pushed us to take a risk with singing.

Mr. Scarr whipped my brother into shape and helped him develop a wonderful love of learning. Which ended up in a Ph.D. and fluency in 5 languages.

**Thank you TLS. Thank you for keeping all the spokes in place so that the wheel kept rolling.**

In my work with kids I remember the caring that our teachers showed and try to emulate their passion and compassion for children. Our TLS teachers are educators in the most wonderful sense of the word. They truly care for both academic and emotional development.

There are six key components that I learned through the TLS education that I would like you to remember as you continue **your** academic and life journey.

**Remember this anagram: CARING.**

### **C-A-R-I-N-G**

**C: Compassion** - particularly for those who may not have had the same opportunities that you have had. Sometimes things are not how they appear on the outside....every family has their own particular strengths. The smallest kindnesses go the farthest way. When you stay positive and compassionate, it's harder for other people to be negative. ....and that can only be a good thing.

**A: Academic Achievement** - your education is the one thing that can never be taken away. It is the best investment that your parents can ever make....and they have made it. When my family moved from Ireland my mom and dad clearly recognized that TLS was the best school and the best education their children could have. Even though it was a sacrifice, they made the commitment to education. My brother and I both now have Ph.D.'s largely in part to my parents' commitment to education. We can all have material

things in the world but they can disappear in an instant. Your education will always be yours.

A recipe for success is to approach the world with your educational background, coupled with wide eyes and a willingness to take a chance.....and you will become the young person you want to be.

**R: Responsibility** – As well educated young people you have a larger responsibility to your community. How your actions affect other's lives. How little things can make a difference.....for example, the thank you note to a teacher who helped you, the phone call to a friend, acknowledging your parents efforts, putting others before yourself. Your character is what people will eventually judge you upon....above all the grades, school acceptances, graduations.

**I : Integrity** – To me, integrity means holding your head high when others are making different decisions. I'm sure you have all been in situations where you had to make a different decision than your classmates or friends. Integrity means being honest, even when you have made a mistake. It means being the bigger person and apologizing first. It means taking other's constructive criticism without taking offence. It means being the mature young people that you are all becoming.

**N: Never Give Up** – try to keep enough balls in the air so that when some fall to the ground you've got others up there. In other words, it's not smart to have "all your eggs or balls in one basket." We are all going to have successes and failures in life. The failures are a learning opportunity. And you never know what might be around the next corner. My colleagues thought that I was nutty- coo-coo to take the risk of opening a children's clinic. Yes, that is a clinical term. It is a success. My father's colleagues thought that he was crazy for moving to the United States and starting Alltech. After building a successful business, my parents have the ability to be able to give back and try new ventures. Never give up on your dreams.

**G: Generosity** – There is no greater satisfaction than in helping others. While my job as a child psychologist is challenging, it is the most rewarding vocation that I could imagine. And we all have different vocations in life. Spark goodness in others. And again, helping people less fortunate can take many forms. ....volunteering your time.....using the gifts that have been given to you to help others (for example.....my brother using his fluent language skills in Spanish to help children in a Mexican orphanage, my parents contributing and developing science labs in school that could not afford to build them, pro-bono work that I do in Chicago.) But perhaps more importantly, be generous with your sense of humor in difficult situations, try to instigate silliness.....silly is good! Where would we be without seeing and generously sharing the humor in situations. It is worth pursuing., and imparting your own sense of wonder to a situation.

**In closing**, I would like to share another quote from Jim Henson.....perhaps Kermit the Frog came up with this one:

“Being afraid isn’t always a bad thing.....sometimes you need that trembling feeling to remind you how exciting it is to be doing something new.”

You are all imparting on a new journey.....embrace the magic of the moment and the excitement as well.

**With CARING you will keep all the spokes moving and everyone will stay on the road to success.**

You have all completed the first important part of the journey. The future is exciting, somewhat scary, and long anticipated. With your solid education at TLS you have the tools to accomplish your goals and dreams. Ask yourselves.....**what are you searching for? This is the most important question. You have the education, drive and support to shape your future.**

**What are you searching for? How do you search for the concept of CARING and keep the Spokes moving? What are you searching for? And How do you keep Caring.**

**Thank you and Congratulations.**

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