

Good morning/afternoon esteemed faculty, honourable guests, loving families and most importantly, the stars of today's show, fellow graduates. To the Class of 2025, we did it! We're here today to celebrate an important milestone, one that marks the end of one chapter of our lives, but also the beginning of another.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and over these past four years, we've been lucky to have so many special people who helped us get here today. And so, let's take a moment to express our deepest gratitude:

To our teachers and coaches: thank you for challenging us to grow and for believing in us even when we didn't believe in ourselves. You taught us how to think, how to lead, how to show up; lessons that we will carry far beyond the classroom or the field.

To our parents, guardians and families: thank you for the sacrifices we saw, and the ones we didn't. Your love and support were the foundation beneath every step we took on this journey.

To our principal Mr. Gagnier, our vice principals, our admin team and support staff: thank you for your leadership and dedication to creating an environment where we could all learn and thrive.

To our guidance counselors: thank you for helping us find our way when the path felt unclear, and for always keeping your doors open to us.

And finally, to us, the graduating Class of 2025, thank you for the laughter, the late nights, the lessons, and the memories. These past years have bonded us in ways that will last a lifetime.

As we celebrate this milestone together, on behalf of the Class of 2025, let's take a moment to appreciate all those who've helped shape us into the people we are today.

Graduates, I want you all to take a moment and look to your left, and to your right... These are the people who laughed with us, stressed with us, and stood beside us during the hardest, most beautiful, and most unexpected parts of these past four years.

Remember us? We started grade nine after the seemingly never-ending March break, with our octomester schedules and those marathon two and a half hour classes. Since then, we've seen each other through it all: the bad haircuts, the worse math tests, the caffeine addictions, and perhaps worst of all, the day the mitochondria went from being the "powerhouse of the cell" to the "site of oxidative phosphorylation." And now, fast forward to us here in our pointy hats and wizard robes, poised to take this diploma, step boldly into the future, and accomplish great things.

What will we remember about Merivale?

Maybe we'll remember our school's incredible athletic performances in field hockey, track and field, volleyball, swimming, ultimate frisbee, and many more.

Maybe we'll remember our Relay for Life fundraisers, where we collectively raised over \$110 thousand dollars in just three years for cancer support and research.

Maybe we'll remember last year's Mean Girls musical or this year's Game of Tiaras and Senior Showcase, all unforgettable productions brought to life by our talented drama team.

Maybe we'll remember the lively music nights and memorable band performances, Holiday Hoopla talent shows and Spring Fling dances or the first post-pandemic student-teacher basketball game.

Or maybe... maybe... we'll remember the small things like the spares we spent together or the hallway conversations. The ordinary days that somehow turned extraordinary just because we shared them.

To be honest, when I first sat down to write this speech, I had no idea what message I wanted to share with you all today. I spent way too long watching graduation speeches on YouTube and googled “the greatest graduation speech ever” far more times than I’m proud to admit. I even turned to Reddit for inspiration, so you can imagine just how desperate I was. After a while, I realized that nearly every speech I came across shared a similar core idea: that as graduates, our futures are blank slates. Fresh starts.

But I see it a different way. Regardless of whether this ceremony marks the end of your academic journey or a continuation, each of our futures has been profoundly shaped by the last four, if not fourteen years. And this reminds me of a story that captures this idea...

There was once a farmer who stumbled upon an abandoned eagle’s egg. Unsure what else to do, he placed the egg in a nest with his chickens. In time, the egg hatched, and the eaglet grew up among the chickens. It learned to peck at the ground, to flutter short distances, and to ultimately live as the chickens did.

Then, one day, the eagle looked up and caught sight of a majestic figure soaring high above the clouds. “Who is that?” the eagle asked.

“That,” the chickens replied, “is an eagle, the king of birds. We don’t fly like that... we’re just chickens.”

And so, the eagle lived its life believing it was just another chicken... never spreading its wings, never daring to rise above the barnyard, never realizing it was born to soar.

This story reminds us that our futures aren’t blank slates waiting to be written, they’re shaped by who we are and what we carry within us. Just like the eagle, we each have the potential to rise high, even if we sometimes forget it.

Today, as we graduate, the world beyond high school stands before us with both daunting challenges and boundless opportunities. Too often, we let the world define our limits. We listen to the voices, sometimes even our own, that tell us what we can't do, who we can't be. But the truth is our potential is not fixed by where we started.

Just look at the world around us. Before Lamborghini made sports cars, they began with tractors. Samsung was once just a grocery store. LG started with face cream. And IKEA? They sold pens. These names we now see as giants had humble, even unlikely beginnings. But they didn't let where they were then define where they could go.

The same is true for us. Yes, the world ain't all sunshine and rainbows; there will be times when life feels like too much, things go wrong or we feel stuck. But when doubt creeps in, and fear tries to keep us grounded, when the world tells us to stay in the barnyard... look up. The sky is not out of reach. No matter what obstacles life throws your way, remember you each have an eagle within you. Choose to believe in your potential. Choose to spread your wings. Choose to soar.

So here's to us, Class of 2025. We came, we saw, we conquered. While high school may be coming to an end, the rest of our lives are just getting started. There's an entire world that awaits us... full of questions we haven't yet asked, people we haven't yet met and moments we haven't yet imagined.

We've learned that energy can't be created or destroyed, only transformed. We're made of the energy of every moment that's brought us here: our friendships, failures, victories, growth. That energy lives on in every life we touch and every place we go.

As we prepare to head toward our next destinations—whether we're travelling the world, starting our careers or heading to college or university—though our paths may diverge, the energy that shaped our years at Merivale will remain a part of who we are. And so, let's choose to carry the kindness, excellence and resilience that defines Merivale's Class of 2025 into every new challenge and opportunity that awaits.

Because the world is ours to shape, and we're ready for it. Thank you and congratulations Class of 2025.

Angelyn Joseph ~ 06.25.2025