

Good morning Mr. Caldwell, faculty, family, and classmates.

Forsan et haec olim meminisse iubabit. The epic hero, Aeneas, speaks these lines during a storm in the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The language he speaks is Latin, which I have studied here with great enthusiasm for four years. His native city, Troy, has just been sacked and although he knows he is fated to found a new city, he does not know what the future holds. He turns to his crewmen and speaks the words: Forsan et haec olim meminisse iubabit. The line means: "Perhaps one day these hardships will be pleasant to remember."

I thought of these lines looking back over my time at MBS. One of the things that makes MBS so rewarding academically is that the school provides students with the opportunity to struggle, and to grow as a consequence. It's really thanks to the teachers that we have the opportunity to struggle. We are, of course, fortunate that I can say "*opportunity*" rather than "necessity." Having the opportunity to struggle means that the teachers provide us with safety, while pushing us out of our comfort zones. They encourage us to face failures without punishing us when they arrive. Take Latin, for example. This year, Dr Gregory asked our Latin 4 class to read Catullus and Ovid in the original. I'd never seen anything like it before. But she expected us to meet the difficult syntax, bizarre vocabulary, and complex meter head-on. And on top of that, she asked us to read it as poetry that meant something—not an exercise in a foreign language translation. It was overwhelming at times. But it deepened my love for Latin and fostered my love for Latin poetry and poetry in general, and I'm looking forward to studying more of both at college next year.

In other words, MBS gave me the chance to live its motto: Ad astra per aspera: “To the stars through hardship.” And I think of Aeneas’ words: “Perhaps one day these struggles will be pleasant to remember.” But I’m not Aeneas, for me there is no perhaps. I am confident that these struggles will be pleasant to remember—they already are. I look back and see that through academic hardships, my curiosity has been cultivated, my critical thinking skills have been developed, and I have been prepared to face future challenges.

Not only do the teachers care about our academics, but they care about us as people. Learning at MBS expands beyond the classroom. A lot of my intellectual growth has happened because of conversations I have had with teachers outside of the classroom and because they provided extra support whenever I needed it. MBS is not grade centered, but rather we are centered in learning for learning’s sake.

One of the struggles that I look back upon fondly now, but was a struggle at the time was in the beginning of sophomore year when I handed in my first analytical english paper to Mr. Kelly. I felt pretty confident about my analysis and figured I would at least get a B. Boy, was I in for a shocker. My heart dropped when I got the essay back with a D- circled on the top of the page. I felt like a complete failure. I had misread the short story we were writing about, my argument was invalid, and none of my evidence was effective. But the teachers here gave me the support I needed to improve. I went to them for extra help on creating a thesis statement, structuring an argument, and finding relevant evidence. Fast-forward to junior year english with Dr. Horan. Although Mr. Kelly had helped my writing develop, there was still a lot of room for improvement. Despite my working hard, Dr. Horan handed back essay after essay with the same feedback: wordy, repetitive, awkward. So I worked even harder, revised more, and continued to

get the help and support I needed from all of my teachers. Finally, at the end of junior year I earned my first outright A on a paper. It took me two years to get from a D- to an A. Even though I felt sick when I saw the D- on that first paper, I can now look back fondly because without that I would not have been pushed to grow. And looking back, it isn't about the grades—it's about the work that I put in, the hardships I faced and overcame, to earn them.

It's been that way with other classes too: with math, and history, and with art, and with dance. And it was in dance class that I heard the words that guided me when I was struggling most. Mr. Ruttman has taught me dance and mentored me since freshmen year. Almost every single day since then, I have heard him say the same thing to me: "You can do anything you want, all you have to do is try." He first said this to me when I was trying to learn a very tricky step in his theater dance class. I wasn't getting it, my morale was low, and I was tired; however, Mr. Ruttman never let me give up. He showed me the proper technique, and encouraged me by saying "You won't get this step overnight. You need to work on it every day, build up the muscles, and I promise you will be able to do this step." So I worked on the step every single day for months. Now, not only can I do the step, but I can do steps even more difficult. Everyone sitting here on stage has a teacher who has done the same thing for them. Our teachers make us feel that our dreams are achievable so long as we explore new ideas, take risks, and push ourselves even when something seems too difficult or beyond our capabilities.

Because I'm a Classics dork, I'll bring it back to Latin and the words of Lucretius, a Roman philosopher. In his long poem on the nature of the universe, he writes: "Ex nihilo nihil fit." Nothing comes from nothing. As Dr. Horan knows, Shakespeare tells us the same thing in

*King Lear*. The words can be understood many ways. But here at MBS, the meaning is clear: no effort will yield no results. Hard work is required in order to achieve your goals. And only the opportunity of facing hardships will allow us to work our hardest. At MBS we have had the support and encouragement to learn what it means to dig deep, to safely fail, and to rise higher—till we reach the stars. We aren't there yet, but MBS has shown us how we can get there. So, as we go forth, let's all remember to keep working harder, keep learning more, and to keep pushing ourselves. If we do that, everything and anything is possible.

Congratulations to the class of 2016!