

Mr. Fay and Mr. Grant, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff, parents, grandparents, alumni, friends, and most importantly, seniors – welcome. We gather each year at this time to reflect on the academic year just completed and to honor and say farewell to the graduating class. This is a time for looking forward and for celebrating all that you – Class of 2019 – have accomplished.

Thank you to the student speakers – this commencement has been intentionally centered on you, the students, so my remarks will be relatively brief at least as far as commencement addresses go!

You have heard me speak about the importance of engagement every year since you entered MBS. As we know, engagement is tied directly to your success as a student and as a member of this community, and you, Class of 2019, have been engaged with MBS since you walked on to campus seven years ago.

As 6th graders, you were the first class to launch *The Crimson Tide*, a five-foot, unmanned sailboat, as part of the Educational Passages program in December 2012, promoted and supported by trustee and parent, Joe Robillard. When you were in 7th grade, *The Crimson Tide* washed ashore in Guernsey after 450 days at sea. Guernsey is an island in the English Channel off the French coast of Normandy.

A Guernsey fisherman repaired and re-launched the boat, and it landed again the spring of your sophomore year. This time in Les Sables d’Olonne, a seaside resort town in western France. The boat was refurbished by students at a marine vocational school in Les Sables.

The French school was able to return the boat to the United States through a partnership with Privilege Marine, a French company that makes luxury catamarans.

Once *The Crimson Tide* arrived in Florida, former trustee Joe Robillard sent a representative to pick it up and drive the boat back to New Jersey.

So, a month ago *The Crimson Tide* returned home after traveling more than 4,000 nautical miles and it now sits in the Middle School Commons.

You launched this boat as sixth graders, and the last month of your senior year it came back to the United States on a catamaran. What a journey, both you and *The Crimson Tide* have had!

Journeying can take many different forms. It can be a physical journey through space, a literary journey through storytelling, or a mental journey through time. Journeying is fluid; it is about moving between points, in might mean moving between identities or between philosophies. To journey is to grow. To journey is to resist being defined by one particular characteristic. Your journey at MBS has been remarkable, and I hope that you consider all of these different ways that you have journeyed. You will take a part of MBS with you and we, in turn, have grown stronger during your time here.

From launching the boat to your conduct this year the Class of 2019's leadership has been visible at every turn. Here are some highlights:

The way the community rallied behind the girls' basketball team as they battled for the County Championship. What struck me at that game was that, while the Chatham fans seemed to be expending a lot of energy chanting at **our** fans, we were focused on supporting our girls on the court. Of course, making ESPN Top 10 doesn't hurt.

The fairytale end of season success of both the girls' soccer team and the boys' lax team were similarly supported by the community, led by you, the seniors.

The Martin Luther King Assembly – what a celebration! It was one of those moments when I felt very proud to be part of this community. While we still have work to do in the area of equity and inclusion, it reminded me of how far we have come in the last 10 years.

The moment when Captain McGoey walked on stage at the end of the academic awards assembly to congratulate the three students who made history by being commissioned to the US Naval Academy in the early round of admission.

There are many more highlights, and I hope that each of you has your own memory of an event, or even an epiphany that represents the year for you.

Your speeches today certainly confirm what MBS has meant to you, but just as importantly, what you have meant to MBS. At the beginning of the year, I asked that you leave MBS even stronger than when you found it. You have done just that.

Yes, we have some new facilities to enhance the experience, but a community is nothing without the people who occupy the space. When Jamie Siminoff, Founder of Ring, visited, he marveled at all of the physical improvements to the campus – the math and science facility, the athletic complex renovation, Wilkie Hall the forthcoming CID. But what made him most happy was the **feel** that emanated from all of you – the students and faculty who are sitting here today have ensured that the feel of MBS has not changed.

The culture of a place is hard to define and a delicate balance to manage, but human relationships are critical to the success of any school. Last month, when Jamie Siminoff set foot on campus, he felt as though he was coming home.

Hopefully you have learned along the way that being involved in this community allows you to also call this place home.



As you may know, *Moby Dick* is one of the great American novels. The book is about Captain Ahab's lust for revenge against Moby Dick, the great white whale that ate his leg. Ahab is so obsessed with killing Moby Dick that he loses all sense of what is important in life, and during the voyage he plunges further and further into madness, ultimately sacrificing the lives of his entire crew in his attempt to capture Moby Dick.

However, before the final confrontation Captain Ahab experiences a moment of reflection. As they near the Fiji Islands, Captain Ahab's ship passes another American ship; this one is headed home, full to the brim with whale oil. Unlike Ahab's dark ship that has suffered terribly because of his obsession with the great white whale, the other ship is overflowing with lively revelry and jubilation in anticipation of returning home. At a loss by what he sees, Ahab pulls from his pocket a vial of Nantucket sand, trying to reconnect with a place that was once his. He is struggling to remember the mental and physical space that he called home. It is startling to see such a dark and vengeful man as Ahab cherish this vial of sand.

So, what is the purpose of this story? No, this does not mean that you need to fill a jar with MBS dirt. You have within you a metaphorical vial of sand that is your internal connection with MBS. This connection will always give you strength.

And so, as you drive out of the gates, go with the confidence that you have the ability to create your own sense of community wherever you may land. With your vial of sand, and your ability to engage and create your own sense of place, you will have an exciting and meaningful journey in all its many forms.

Congratulations, class of 2019 – go forth to continue the work that you began here – we are all very proud of you.