



The Silhouette



SENIOR REFLECTIONS

Dive into the stories and reflections of the Class of *2023*...

Jennie Brady



Aurora Contreras-Piñera



Cassidy McNew



Alessandra Inners



STELLA GLADSON



SYDNEY CHRISTNER





Alessandra Inners

"It'll all go by so quick, and the next thing you know you'll be in college."

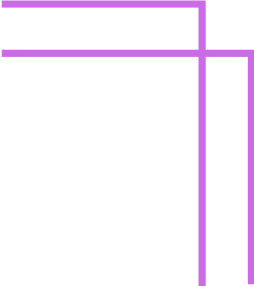
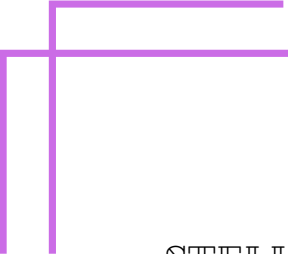
I remember rolling my eyes every time I heard someone tell me this. I'm sure many other high school students have heard this age-old line as well. As a freshman I failed to realize that they really weren't lying. One minute you're at your first pep rally watching the seniors proudly cheer and yell, and the next, you're a senior writing down the measurements for your cap and gown. So, with high school being a whirlwind of fond memories, good friends, and learning experiences, what would I want to tell my freshman self now that it is all coming to an end?

Slow down.

Yes, really, those are the only words I would say. Why? It was what I needed to hear the most. Taking part in higher level classes throughout high school, I always found myself biting WAY more than I could chew. Between class projects, roles and responsibilities in clubs, and even friends and family, I would always offer to do more than I could accomplish in one day. I spent a lot of time stressing myself out over balancing my school life and personal life, and felt even more stress overthinking the next steps of my education. "SLOW DOWN!" I wish I could have yelled it at myself. I was so caught up in the tasks I needed to complete and the places I needed to go that I never really took in my surroundings. I was never able to truly be present in every moment, even the smallest ones, and appreciate everything that I had. But, how would I change this mistake?

I've learned that there's no one way to fix this, but rather doing a combination of what works best for you personally. For me, I realized my mental limit; however, I failed to set boundaries and act on the limit to provide myself breaks. If I had simply let myself rest when I knew I had reached my limit, I feel it would have prevented a lot of the burnout and anxiety I felt. It's also as simple as just looking around and being aware. Look at every detail, every sound and scent, every friend and loved one. Take in all the sights and chatter, and eventually you'll come to the realization of how wonderful of an opportunity it is to be present and alive at this time and in this place, no matter how fast everything feels like it's moving. Just slow down.





STELLA GLADSON

First of all, I want to offer my thanks to our senior editors. Jennie, Aurora, and Alessandra, thank you for keeping the Silhouette running smoothly this year. To Mr. Makowski, thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my opinions, advance my writing skills, and share unnecessary scientific facts with my fellow Colonials over the past two years.

Since I walked into this school as a cowering freshman, I've experienced the best it had to offer: teachers who were more than happy to spend extra time answering my questions, students who kept classes interesting and supported me through the tumultuous four years, and classes that shifted my perspective and expanded my educational horizons.

However, while I enjoyed my time here, it wasn't perfect. Despite all the good this school brings, I felt the pain of isolation from the social order, and a wish for an education that offered more than routine. I found that cliques and gossip overtook meaningful connection, even among those who were rewarded for their "niceness." We only liked each other for what we had; the superficial friendships and short-term rivalries overtook our potential for true connection.

As usual, someone else said it better than I could. W.B. Yeats, in his 1933 poem "Before the World Was Made," wrote:

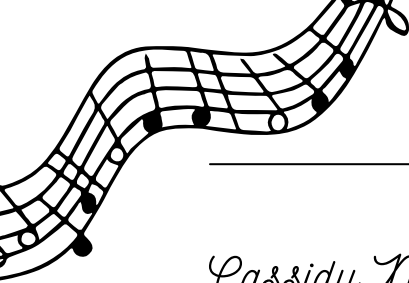
*I'd have him love the thing that was
Before the world was made.*

We've seen a crisis of vanity here, and not just the kind bolstered by eyeliner and crop tops. It seems that everyone, myself included, wants to be recognized for what they have or what they can do. We shower the "good kids" in scholarships, awards, and varsity letters.

But Yeats says that the best love, the only love that will really satisfy us, is love for our original selves. The class of 2023 is leaving for a new world, one where few people know what grades you got in high school or that you were team captain.

Maybe, just maybe, don't ask your new coworkers or classmates about that. Instead, find out who they really are, and love them for it.

Best wishes to all.



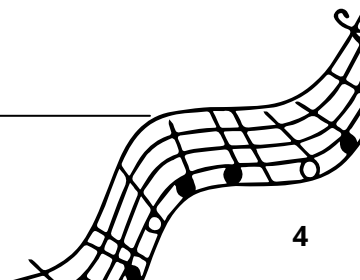
Cassidy McNew

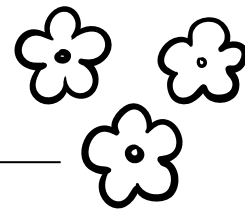
Dear Freshmen Year Me,

You did it. Do not ask questions as to how, but you did it. You may have thought that you would never get to this point in life, but you did. We got through it and had a rough time doing so. From October 2019 to now, we unfortunately never got much of a break. From family drama to personal demons, high school was something. We never even got through the first year of high school without something horrible happening. And on top of all the trauma that we endured, a pandemic came around and just crushed all of our hopes and dreams about having a normal 4 years of school. But it's okay, I can promise you that. Sure it may seem like the world is going to end and nothing will ever go right, but I promise you that it will all work out. This is just one small bump in the road of life. Just keep pushing and I promise that you will find joy and comfort in the bright future ahead of you. Everything that you want at this point in time, either relationships with people or future career goals, will all point to you. Just keep your head up and keep pushing.

We got into our dream school, can you believe it?! Sure you got the news at a pretty bad time since we were recovering from a concussion, but we got it nonetheless! We did a show we knew pretty much nothing about, but made the best memories and friendships that we still hold near and dear to our hearts to this day. We are doing another show with almost all of them again! It's so cool. But I have to be honest. We almost quit choir. I know, but don't overreact since it was an 'almost.' It just became so much of a chore and it seemed pointless at the time to go back to a class that didn't bring you joy anymore. But you know what? We took advice from the people we care about most and decided to stick it through the rest of senior year. And looking at the future up ahead at Millersville, joining collegiate choirs is at the very top of the 'I Want' list. Senior year was not nearly as chaotic as freshman or sophomore year, but it was something. But here we are: graduating and leaving behind a school district that we gave so much to over the past 12 years. It will not be an easy goodbye, nobody said that it would be. Yes, it is scary to think of what the future will hold. Yes, it is scary that you are leaving your home, friends, and family. But rest assured, it is not that scary. Because there is a way and there is a road that will lead you home.

Sincerely,
Future You





Aurora Contreras-Piñera

My first experience in the Conewago Valley School District was not necessarily a pleasant one.

I distinctly remember standing in front of my homeroom teacher's desk in 7th grade, with glossy eyes, as she told me, "You went to that bilingual school, right? So, instead of going to Choir tomorrow, you will go to the remedial English class. We just need to make sure you know what you are doing!"

Her enthusiastic tone was not enough to conceal the humiliating nature of her message.

From that moment on, I was led to believe that because I spoke two languages, I was... inferior. Because I was a member of two cultures, I was different. And I suppose it was at that moment that my obsession with college was enhanced.

Sure, I knew I wanted to go to college since kindergarten, but when it became clear that it was not going to be an easy road, I decided that everything I did in school was for college.

All the late nights spent perfecting essays, all the advisory periods spent asking additional questions, and all the countless hours spent memorizing the parts of a cell were leading me up to the moment that I would leave for college and go as far away as possible.

I never saw high school, let alone any academic environment, as a 'fun' experience. It was merely a stepping stone for what I had been working towards my entire life. And during my time here, my perception of New Oxford has drastically transformed, but my mission never did.

My entire high school experience was consumed by the idea of college and I am not ashamed of that – it allowed me to have a focus, something to guide my goals. However, as I reach the end of senior year, I have realized that I accomplished everything I sought out to do: I am going to college this fall and I am going to one of the best higher education institutions in the country! I should feel happy, right?

I mean, I'm thrilled! I cannot wait till I get to move to my college! But part of me feels, for lack of a better term... scared. Scared of college professors. Scared of being over 2,000 miles away from my family and friends.

Scared of being alone.

I suppose kindergarten Aurora never anticipated this...

But if there is one thing that I will take with me from New Oxford, it is this:

Courage.

It may sound cliché, but the most valuable lesson I learned here was how to be brave.

Whether that be having a conversation with my English teacher on why I believed that I did not require any additional assistance with my first language, to trying out for the basketball team (despite never having touched a basketball in my life) or being the only girl in a Physics 2 classroom.

And do not assume that I succeeded when I faced each of these challenges. In fact, I probably failed more times than I succeeded. But these adversaries never, not once, deterred me. In addition to my own internal struggles, I also faced outside forces who relished in the act of telling me "No."

"No, you can't be in a fall sport and do marching band."

"No, you can't take 4 APs simultaneously."

"No, you can't get into college."

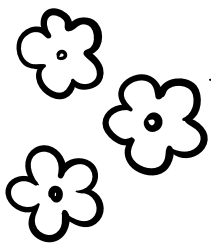
Notice how the word "No," is followed by "you can't."

You can't.

I... can't?

Oh, but I did!

I did all of those things and more. Sure, I failed, I fell, and I cried along the way, but I made the decision to stand back up and fight on. And I hope that in what ever you do, you decide to do the same thing.





SYDNEY CHRISTNER

Dear Freshman Sydney,

Stop being so scared of high school. I know the thought of being a high school student is freaking you out. You're nervous to have a different teacher for each class, to have classes without any of your friends, to be the newbie in all of your extracurriculars, and to have hours of homework each night. In reality, none of those will be an issue for you at all. You will end up loving that you have classes with so many different teachers because eventually many of those teachers will be individuals you look up to as mentors. You will love those classes that none of your closest friends are in because you will meet new people that you now consider close friends. At first it may be hard to feel like the most inexperienced in the extracurricular activities you join, but there comes a time when you adjust and achieve great things in the activities you choose to be a part of. Most importantly, it's not true that you will have hours of homework every night. Sometimes it may feel like a lot, but I promise it's not at all as much as you expect.

You will change drastically throughout high school. The experiences you have will help you grow your confidence and allow you to easily feel proud of yourself. You learn to not take everything so seriously and that there is so much more to school than being in the hardest classes with the perfect grades. Some things will happen that you do not expect. Some of them are difficult to overcome, but ultimately you will, and they will make you a stronger individual. However, some of the unexpected things are great and positively life changing. Your efforts will pay off, you will grow close with the people you least expect, and you will have opportunities that you will never forget. You will even try new things and love so many of them! I bet you would never guess that you join the swim team your senior year and end up loving it so much that you plan to continue doing it. You'll really regret not starting earlier.

Enjoy each and every moment of being in high school because it will be over before you know it. Sooner than it feels, you will be writing a letter to your 9th grade self as your last article in the school newspaper, reflecting on your high school experience and thinking about how hard it's going to be to say goodbye in two weeks. So please stop being scared, and instead look forward to the amazing four years ahead of you. I promise you'll love them.

Sincerely,
Future Sydney

A Letter to the Class of 2023

Jennie Brady

As we savor our last days together, before finally finishing this chapter of our lives, I want to thank each and every one of you for being a part of the story of my life. We've spent countless days with each other for years of our lives. We experienced many of our first memories with each other. Whatever we do in the future, we are tied to each other by these memories, ones we will carry with us as we face new challenges and create new relationships. In our last week of high school we have the sobering opportunity to really see the faces of the people who have shaped us. Take a good look around—really take it all in—because this may be the last time you see many of these people.

In 2010 we stepped into school for the first time. We were at the bottom of the totem pole, where everything was bigger than us. We received our student ID numbers that would eventually become like a second name. We knew the 23 at the beginning represented our graduation year, but that really meant nothing to us because it was unbelievably far away. But now we're at the top of that totem pole, awaiting the diplomas that will send us into the world to accomplish our dreams. At five years old, none of us could have begun to imagine the 13 years that lay in front of us.

From the lock down because of the "killer clown" walking their dog by CVIS to the recent one involving the vending machine guy, we've been through it all together. We were with each other through a shortened freshman year, a hybrid sophomore year, to finally getting a "normal" senior year. From P5s to Ox Blocks to Colonial Cash. Field trips like BizTown, Camp Cares, and of course Hersheypark in 8th grade where we had to escape a tornado warning. Through the ever-changing bells, especially the favorite of Mr. Long announcing that it is indeed "Boot Camp Thursday." We managed to have the lowest spirit stick winning rate, only winning the first and last pep rallies of our senior year. All the times someone asked around the entire classroom to find the one person with their

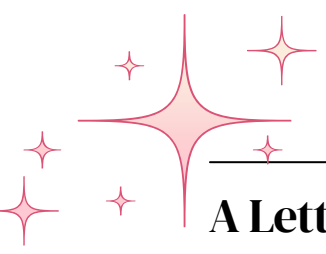
IPad charger. From foursquare to the gymnastics equipment at CVIS. We saw privilege passes, accomplished sports teams and music ensembles, all the school projects (yeah, I'm looking at you "Jetty Perry and some other kid"), watching classmates come and go, the passing of our beloved intermediate school principal Dr. Armacost, losing a classmate the summer before senior year, and so much more. These are the memories that tie us all together. No matter where we go, we're connected to each other.

But this is it, graduation...

While we spent our years making memories, time was slowly slipping through our fingers. Along the way, we learned and grew into the young adults who are about to transition to the rest of our lives. Throughout all of it, we were learning lessons to carry with us throughout life. Among the lessons I've learned in the walls of this school are what I believe to be the two most important elements of life: expressing love and savoring life.

Leaving the life we've always known is scary; the feelings that arise can be difficult to handle and are as old as time. As we attempt to carry our memories with us while creating new ones, the answer to solving the difficult feelings is through love. Creating new love-filled memories makes the hard life changes much easier. As we move forward into adulthood, we have the opportunity to change the world for the better. All of us can find small ways to positively impact another person's life. Performing a simple act of kindness brings love into someone's life, which can lead to them passing that kindness on.





A Letter to the Class of 2023 (*cont.*)

On a summer vacation last year, I met a super impactful restaurant manager who left me with long-lasting advice. He told me “Anything that comes from the heart is good.” Find a job that fulfills your heart and makes you feel like you’re creating something important to you and the world. While you’re at that, find the people who set your heart on fire and are always in your corner. Keep them around because when times get tough, you will need them.

While we cannot fix some of the problems that leave us feeling pessimistic, we have the ability to not wait to do all the things we always wanted to do. A quote I have hanging in my room questions, “why must we wait until we run out of time to start to accomplish all that we dreamed, when once we had all the time in the world?” Savoring life makes it much easier to love. We have the ability to wake up every day and choose to make the most of life—take that privilege and run with it. Don’t push things off just hoping for “the perfect time.” That imaginary time will pass you by before you even know it was there. Furthermore, don’t continue down a path that you hate, whether it be a college major, a career choice, or a relationship. It’s never too late to restart. The power to change and create the life you want is always there. Love big, love often, and savor life.

In just a few short days, we receive our diplomas and officially head into one of the biggest transitions of our lives. Our journey together comes to an end, but your next adventure is just about to begin. For now, go on and make memories with new people that we can talk about when we meet again. Keep the memories you made in the Conewago Valley School District close to you, but allow room to fill your heart with new and exciting memories. This is a hard transition, but don’t forget, you still have so many new favorites to discover. While we’re about to leave everything we’ve ever known, we’re on to create new beginnings and memories. I wish you love and all the best in life.

The College Admissions Process

Aurora Contreras-Piñera

I have always known that I wanted to go to college. Well, to be frank, it wasn't really an option in my family. But in my mom's eyes, it was good that I had made up my own mind so quickly.

I was in kindergarten telling everyone that I was going to go to Millersville University (I didn't even apply).

In middle school I wanted to go to Princeton University (I got rejected).

Throughout high school I wanted to go to my ultimate dream school: the University of California: Los Angeles, also known as UCLA (I got waitlisted).

And after many, MANY sleepless nights and tears, I can say happily that I will be attending the University of Southern California this fall, but the road I took to get to this point was a long one and I made many, MANY mistakes along the way. Now, I am here sharing my tips and tricks for rising seniors and anyone who might be going through this process soon, to make sure you don't make the same mistakes that I made, and maybe do some things that helped me along the way.

First, some basic application facts:

-Common App

1. The majority of American higher education institutions use a third party application website called Common App.
2. This is where students enter all basic information (Personal Information, Family Information, etc.), activities, awards, and your Common App Personal Statement/Essay.
3. You may add up to 20 schools on the Common App.
4. Common App opens every year on August 1st.

-Application Deadlines and Considerations

- **Early Decision I** (Usually November 1): if you apply ED I, you are telling that school that they are your first choice. If admitted, **YOU MUST ATTEND THAT SCHOOL**; it is a binding agreement and you must withdraw any other submitted or open applications. You can only apply ED I to

one school and many institutions do not allow you to apply early to any other private institutions if you apply to their school ED.

- **Restrictive Early Action** (Usually November 1): if you apply REA, you are telling that school that they are your first choice. If you are admitted, **YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO ATTEND**; it is a non-binding agreement. However, you can only apply REA to one private school; applying REA will not limit you from applying early to public schools.
- **Early Decision II** (Usually January 1): if you apply ED II, you are telling that school that they are your first choice. If admitted, **YOU MUST ATTEND THAT SCHOOL**; it is a binding agreement and you must withdraw any other submitted or open applications. You may only apply ED II to one school. The ED II deadline is meant for students who are passionate about one particular school but wish to have more time to work on their applications, rather than submitting on the November 1 ED I deadline.
- **Regular Decision** (Usually January 1): If you apply RD, you are telling that school that you are interested in attending. If you are admitted, **YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO ATTEND**; it is a non-binding agreement.

*** *Every school has different deadlines. Research your colleges to decide what process works best for you.*

-Public v. Private Schools

- Public schools are owned by states and are funded by their respective state government. In Pennsylvania, there are two major branches of public schools: Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (which includes Bloomsburg University, Millersville University, West Chester University, and twelve other schools) and the Pennsylvania State University campuses (which includes Penn State University Park, Penn State Mont Alto, Penn State Altoona, and seventeen other schools). The University of Pittsburgh is not in either of these categories, but is still classified as a public school.



The College Admissions Process (*cont.*)

- Private schools do not receive funding from the state or federal government and are known to have higher tuition rates than public schools. However, they are more generous with scholarship money than public schools in order to offset the cost of attending. Private schools are also smaller than public schools. Some well-known private schools in Pennsylvania include University of Pennsylvania, Carnegie Mellon University, Swarthmore College, Lehigh University, Bucknell University, and Villanova University.

-Reach v. Target v. Safety Schools

1. Reach schools are classified as schools with approximately a 35% or lower acceptance rate. These are also known as "Dream Schools." Do not be afraid to "shoot your shot," when it comes to Reach schools. You'll never know if you would have gotten in if you didn't submit an application to start off with.
2. Target schools are classified as schools with approximately a 36% to 75% acceptance rate. These are schools that you believe you have a solid chance of getting into.
3. Finally, safety schools are classified as schools with a 76% or higher acceptance rate.

-Now, Some Tips and Tricks:

1. Start Planning the Summer Before Senior Year (Not a Second Earlier, Not a Second Later)

I know that researching colleges can seem daunting, make the entire situation real, but unless you know exactly where you want to go, I suggest you start looking at colleges the summer after junior year. Over the summer, you have less commitments, no assignments, and so much more time on your hands. Take advantage of that. On the College Board website, there is a "College Search" function, where you can research every higher education institution in the United States. You do not have to go onto every single university's website (like I did) but you can filter down the results to match your academic

preferences, public v. private, average GPA, location, and even extracurricular opportunities. It is an extremely resourceful tool that I recommend everyone use.

2. Make Your Personal Narrative Interesting

Admission counselors read thousands upon thousands of applications everyday, making their job extremely mundane. Your Personal Essay can either grab their attention, or it can be another application in the pile. Tell a compelling story that not only conveys your personality, but also your future aspirations. Make sure you have a beginning, middle, and end. Think of it almost as an English essay; you need to have a thesis and by the end of your writing, you should have proved it and had an impact on your reader. You do not need to be formal, in fact, add some well calculated humor in there. Also, you can really shine amongst other applicants if you somehow incorporate your intended major in your essay. For example, my intended major is Astronomy/Astrophysics and I wrote my essay from the point of view of a tour guide at an observatory. I showcased three pivotal moments of my life through constellations. Whatever you decide to do, make sure you make it about YOU!

3. "How Many Schools Should I Apply To?"

This is entirely up to you! If you think you can handle applying to 15+ colleges (like me), then you do that; but if you'd prefer a smaller number, that's perfectly fine (in fact, many college admissions advisors recommend you only apply to 6-8 schools). However, if you want to give yourself as many opportunities as possible, you can do that. But remember, applications cost MONEY! Some schools don't have application fees, meaning they are free, and some cost up to \$90. Fortunately, I was able to apply to many schools because I received fee waivers from various sources. For example, I applied for the Questbridge Scholarship program, which has a very long and arduous application process. I did not get past the first round of selection, but because I had taken the time to submit an application, many of Questbridge's partner schools offered me fee waivers. In other instances, I received fee waivers from...

The College Admissions Process (*cont.*)

4. Attend Virtual Information Sessions Over the Summer

... doing exactly what you read for number four. While I was researching colleges, I noticed that the majority of colleges offered an online information session. I took advantage of this and attended a Zoom session for every school I was really passionate about. In the end, it helped me narrow down my list from finding out what things I liked and what I did not like from my favorite schools. And, again, you can get fee waivers from attending these online events!



5. Covid-19 Is Starting to Go Away and So Is "Test Optional"

Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, colleges started going "Test Optional," meaning that they did not require applicants to submit SAT/ACT test scores. But that is going away... very quickly. If you want to apply to competitive schools within the next few years, and you don't have a competitive SAT/ACT score, study... like now. I studied for the SAT, but only for like a cumulative 2 hours over summer break going into senior year and I did not get the score I wanted. I took it again and did better, but it definitely was not going to help my application. So, I went Test Optional, which still might be an option for current juniors, but for anyone younger... good luck.

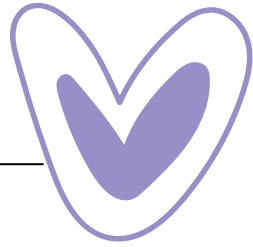
6. Do Not Wait till 11:59 PM To Submit Your Application

I did this wayyyyyy too often and while I submitted my USC application one minute before the deadline, I do not recommend waiting that long. One mistake I made was thinking that I had to start my regular decision applications after the Early Decision/Early Action deadlines and this is completely and utterly false. You can submit your Regular Decision application at any time before the deadline.

7. College Admissions Is a Game

College Admissions officers are people; they have their good days and bad days. When they read your application, they could have just gotten coffee spilled all over their desk, or they could have won the lottery. Maybe, they just could not accept you simply because they have already reached maximum capacity for Biology majors or Marketing majors. Once you submit an application, it's out of your hands. So, don't stress about it and spend some time enjoying the journey. Unless you plan on applying for Grad school after you get your bachelor's degree, this will be the only time you'll experience this kind of process.

I hope you found this helpful and if you have any questions regarding the college admissions process, I recommend you talk to your guidance counselor. If they are unavailable, there are numerous resources on social media that will help you steer in the right direction. And, finally, if you have any questions about my college admissions process, please feel free to reach out! I wish you the best of luck and I hope you enjoy your last year of high school!



To the Class of 2024:

Jennie Brady

To the next senior class:

Thank you. Thank you for the memories from 2011 until now. Thank you for the times we teamed up to win spirit sticks or had random classes together in high school, making our time here so much better. Thank you for planning our senior Prom and all the dancing together at countless school dances. Thank you for the laughs that made our stomachs hurt and the sports teams that were better because of you. Maybe you've looked up to the current seniors since you were in kindergarten, but it's your time to grow without us.

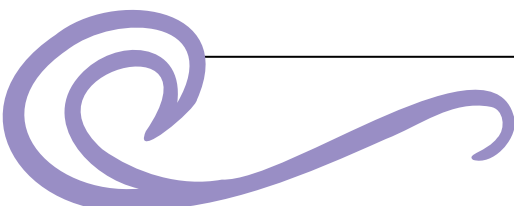
As the seniors graduate, it is now your turn...

The Class of 2023 passes you the torch. Go make the best of your senior year. You officially rule the school!

A few pieces of advice as you soon adventure into your last year of high school:

- It'll go faster than any other year of school. Make as many memories as you can!
- Take the classes you've always wanted to take.
- Strengthen your relationships with your favorite teachers. They can be there for you as you apply to college, as a recommendation, or just to listen!
- Build relationships with underclassmen! My favorite friendships I created this year were not seniors.
- If you recognize a problem within the school (i.e. broken bathroom locks, parking issues, classes, etc.), talk to admin! I promise they're willing to work with you more than you might think.
- Take so many pictures and videos. You won't want to forget these memories and people!
- Finally, have fun! This is your last year at NOHS, make it what you want; things are fun if you decide to make them fun.

I'm so excited to see everything you accomplish your senior year and beyond. I'm so proud of you all for making it to this point. You have much to be proud of! Now go and have the best senior year possible!



One last thank you to all of the writers and editors of the Silhouette!



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