

## 2025 Providence Day Graduation

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed faculty, proud parents, dedicated staff, and the extraordinary Class of 2025. It is both a privilege and an honor to stand before you today to celebrate this momentous occasion. Graduation is not just a milestone; it is a transformative moment in your lives, marking the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance, and personal growth. Today, we gather not only to acknowledge your academic achievements but also to reflect on the lasting friendships and the profound sense of community that have nurtured you throughout your time at Providence Day.

Let's just take a moment to look around and savor this day. It takes intention to be present in a place and I'd like for you to concentrate on being present to your graduation today. Occupying the present also involves being aware of the past events and the people who brought you here.

I believe in the power of education to change lives and the importance of nurturing friendships that can last a lifetime. The reason I believe this is because any success or joy in my life is a direct result of the convergence of my relationships (family, friends, teachers, coaches, work mentors) and my education (both formal and informal – through maintaining an open curiosity). Likewise, your joy and your future success are testaments to what has been poured into you by your teachers, coaches, friends and most importantly, your families who have had a part in giving you this wonderful education.

A hobby I greatly enjoy that shapes me is reading. Around the time that I started preparing my remarks for today, I read a book by Arthur Brooks entitled *Strength to Strength*, which is a book on finding purpose and meaning in the latter part of your life. At the same time, I was reading a compilation of sermons by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the topic of Love. I have drawn some thoughts from both books and have found them to contain some wonderful insights on the different dimensions of life. I'd like you to consider three of life's dimensions – its **length, depth and breadth**.

First, there's **length** -allow yourselves to think about the span of time that you have been a student and the sum of events that have brought you to this day. The length of time you've enjoyed up to this point of your life is a complete gift and should be valued as such. Viewing life as a gift allows you to value your time as precious. This sentiment will seep into everything you do and cause you to be selective in how you use it. It will also confer meaning and intention onto everything in which you participate. As a result, the people and communities you involve yourselves with will benefit through the value and importance you place upon them.

Seeing the length of your days as a gift enables you to see the people and places you encounter as gifts as well. Dr. King says, and I quote "Can you believe that? That no matter where you stand, no matter how much popularity you have, no matter how much education you have, no matter how much money you have, you have it because somebody in this universe helped you to get it. And when you see that, you can't be arrogant, you can't be supercilious." Make it a practice, starting today, to recognize and

be thankful for the incredible community that surrounds you—your families, your friends, your teachers and anyone else who have played pivotal roles in your life and your success. When you do, you can't help but want to pay it forward to others you encounter in your life.

To the parents and families present today, thank you for the loving and unwavering support of your graduate. Your commitment to their education has played a vital role in their success. The sacrifices you have made, the encouragement you have provided, and the values you have instilled have helped mold the remarkable individuals we see before us today. You have been their biggest advocates, celebrating their achievements and comforting them in times of struggle. Your love and dedication have made a deep impact and today is as much a celebration of you as it is of your graduates.

To the educators—you teachers, counselors, coaches and mentors who have gone above and beyond to guide, inspire, and challenge these students. You have dedicated your time, energy, and passion to ensure that they are not only well-prepared academically but also equipped with the skills needed to navigate the world beyond these walls. You have taught them to strive for excellence while providing support and encouragement along the way.

As we look ahead, it is essential to recognize the responsibility that comes with this new chapter in your lives. You are stepping into a world that is filled with both challenges and opportunities. This leads to the second life dimension and that is **depth**. The depth of your life is formed through experiences that stretch and challenge you. It is formed most often in those times that don't go as planned. These life experiences cause you to dig deep and to unearth resources within yourself that you didn't know you possessed. Many times, going through hard times enables you to notice others who are struggling too. A gift of challenging times is the empathy for others that can develop. Empathy is one of the biggest gifts you can offer to the world.

Empathy can motivate you to move towards others rather than away from them and can also help you to look beyond the surface. As you do, understanding for others can result. This understanding is helpful not only interpersonally but also societally. Many things in life are presented as win-lose or either-or propositions, when a third option exists. Don't be afraid to choose a generous route when it appears that there isn't enough to go around. Be brave to pursue innovative solutions where multiple people win.

In our school, we have fostered a sense of community that encourages this empathy, along with friendship, collaboration, and resilience. Our Charger community has been a nurturing ground that has allowed you to grow not only as students but as individuals who understand the value of connection. As you go your separate ways, lean on your friends, support one another, and continue to build the depth of those connections.

The final life dimension to consider is **breadth**, which is activated as you allow empathy to extend your reach into the wider world. Find ways to engage with those around you in your new environments. Volunteer, join clubs, or be part of

initiatives that resonate with your passions. Whether it's through service projects, advocacy, or simply lending a helping hand to someone in need, you can be a force for good in your community. The impact of your actions, no matter how small, can create ripples that extend far beyond what you can see.

A story illustrating the value of extending your sense of community and with it your breadth of life is the Good Samaritan, which is a story about a traveler who was beaten and left for dead, while respected members of his society passed by and did nothing. It took a Samaritan, who was an outcast of that day and despised, to stop to care for the traveler and provide him with compassion and kindness. The story asks the question “who was a neighbor to this man?” and causes us to ask what it means to be a good neighbor. In his comments on this story, Dr. King said that the Good Samaritan was a great man because he had the mental equipment for a dangerous altruism. I thought that King’s remarks provide a challenge to us all in how we allow our education and our concern for others to develop us into dangerous forces for good in our society. I like the blending of the two words “dangerous” and “altruism” because these words recognize that looking outside of yourself comes with a cost and calls upon you to step outside of your comfort zone. However, as you do, it allows you to discover your higher purpose and calling. This discovery provides an opportunity for your life to come full circle - marrying your actions with all of the good things that have been poured into you.

I would offer to you today that between the meaningful connections you have formed and the education you have received at Providence Day - these inputs have provided you with the mental equipment to participate in a dangerous altruism. This is the hallmark of allowing education to infiltrate all the dimensions of your life – its length, depth and breadth. There is no better way to pay homage to the wonderful education you’ve received and to those people who have shared their lives with you.

Congratulations, Class of 2025! Here’s to a future filled with lasting friendships, meaningful contributions to your communities, and a life rich with purpose and fulfillment. Thank you!