

# Valedictory Address

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Hello friends, families, faculty, and honoured guests. Before we begin, I would like to sincerely thank all of you for being present with us today; for, no matter how unorthodox this all may feel, today marks a milestone in the lives of 210 young innovators about to make their mark on the world.

When you're a kid, the world is like puddy in your hands. Through the wonder-filled eyes of a child, nothing is impossible; we can be anything that we want to be! When I was a kid, I loved to think about what it would be like to be a high school senior – the year that, according to the movies, was where everything would finally fall into place. At recess, my best friend and I would always fantasize about this day: our dress, our awards, our strategy to get both Zac Efron from *17 Again* and Mason from *Wizards of Waverley Place* to be our dates, I mean we had it planned to a tee! Quick spoiler alert... that plan didn'tttttt quite work out like we thought it would.

But, I guess that one of the alluring idiosyncrasies of life is its fluidity; right when you think you know what's going to happen, suddenly it swerves and zooms in the other direction. Luckily, as we grow older, we begin to collect tools along the way; tools that allows to etch and shape our sculptures of life to better equip us for a future of unpredictability.

Now, we may not have realized it at the time, but Bruns has provided us with enough to leave our tool belts overflowing. We've learned so much over the past four years like: if you're gonna be late, you might as well get an iced capp while you're at it and an unsynced OneNote can solve all your problems. We learned when to admit defeat after taking the cell review bio test four years in a row and, still, managing to fail every one or (even more daunting) after attempting to challenge Mr. Froemel to his own board game. We learned the beauty of art as the Periodic Table Song and SOHCAHTOA danced in our heads and learned the not-so beautiful side of art in some of our more... chaotic dance off meetings.

While we're talking about learning, here's a fun fact about me: I have always loved movies and film; actors and actresses. I idolized those on the silver screen and dreamed that, one day, I could be like the characters before me. However, as much as I loved Zac Efron in *17 Again*, that's all he was: a character. When I got to high school, I was greeted with an all-star cast; tangible, complex human beings with ambition, wit, intelligence, and, albeit, plenty of flaws; peers who pushed me to be my best self and helped me realize who that was in the process.

That said, J.H. Bruns, above all, has taught us community; people sculpting people. Even through our darkest hours, we have managed to lift each other up to reach our full potential. Whether that was cheering our cross country and volleyball teams on to their provincial titles or senior band members offering other members a shoulder to cry on each time we were given a piece with 7/8 time. The theatre tribe reminding us of our self-worth with 13 powerful words or banding together to make what was about to be the biggest comeback in grade wars history, our victories way outnumber our losses. We went from sitting in our desks counting down the minutes until class was over to watching our calendars; waiting for the day when we could finally go back, wishing for another chance to do it all over again... together.

I think I'm not alone in saying that there were times over the past months when I thought this day would never come, but here we are. By being here today, it feels like we are finally returning back to normal, but, as the rubble clears and the chaos subsides, one has to ask: THIS is normal? Outside the doors of J.H. Bruns Collegiate, socioeconomic divide, ongoing racial inequality, and the severe degradation of our climate greet us with open arms. We started our school year marching for a Green New Deal and ended it marching for the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others whose names we refuse to let be forgotten. Yes, the controversies our world faces are



not black and white, but every shade in between. Still, as we enter this new chapter of our lives, we have both the ability and the responsibility to ensure that our cries for justice will not fade into merely a memory. Because, to call this version of our world normal is merely slapping a band-aid on a bullet wound and turning the other cheek.

As the Class of 2020, the world has been thrown into our hands. It's battered and bruised, yet we have been asked to sculpt and restore it into something beautiful. I may be biased, but I truly believe that, if anyone can revitalize that beauty, it's the graduates in front of me. Douglas H. Everett said, "There are some people who live in a dream world, and there are some who face reality; and then there are those who turn one into the other." We have been dreaming about this day forever and, if we don't choose to live deliberately using the tools that J.H. Bruns has given us and forge upon the road less travelled, we risk letting those aspirations be lost in the tides of time.

Though we may no longer be kids, the world is still like puddy in our hands. What we sculpt may vary; whether it be a cure for cancer, a small business turned empire, a monopoly on mars, a fire mix-tape, a world powered by green energy, or a mountain of money inside your lambo from all that TikTok coin, the paramount future achievements coming to this group of individuals are limitless. And somehow, despite this vast possibility, one common element is still present within them all, one that binds all our futures together: hope. We are far from normal; we are Broncos, we are infinite, and because of that, it is our duty to make those sculptures come to life.

Congratulations Class of 2020! Let's go create our new normal.