

Good Morning Dominion High School Faculty and staff, family, friends, distinguished guests and 2010 Graduates. It is truly an honor to be standing here before you today. However, before I begin, it is important to acknowledge those who have helped you reach this monumental day. First and foremost your family, they have supported you throughout your journey and have encouraged you to challenge yourself. Secondly, your peers; you have all helped each other in one way or another become the person you are today. And last, but certainly not least, the faculty and staff of Dominion High School. Your extraordinary teachers have prepared you for today and believe in you.

Class of 2010 we've had a good run together. I must admit I was excited and a little bit shocked to be chosen as your speaker today. I thought you had heard enough of Ms. Norton's words of wisdom. I guess this will be my last opportunity, so I better do my best to leave you with words you can carry with you always. These must be very special words that you can draw upon when you need to decide a direction to take or a choice to make. So, my three final pearls of wisdom are these: first, make good choices. Sounds simple? We all know choices are often cloaked by circumstances that cloud clear answers. Perhaps a good choice involves moving out of our comfort zone or using more caution than we normally would. We must do our best to choose the high road, be true to ourselves, and think of others. Throughout life we are presented with opportunities to learn new life lessons. We must use what we have learned from these situations and move forward.

Doctor Seuss aptly discusses making wise choices in the book, Oh, The Places You'll Go! He writes, "You'll come to a place where the streets are not marked. Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked. A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin! Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in? How much can you lose? How much can you win? And IF you go in, should you turn left or right...or right and three quarters? Or, maybe, not quite? Or go around back and sneak in from behind? Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find, for a mind maker-upper to make up his mind."

We must know from the beginning that some of our choices will need adjustments. As we know, good choices are sometimes very difficult to make.

That leads us to pearl two: perseverance. As you have discovered, life presents us with many challenges. Ultimately, we are defined by how we react to these challenges. If we choose to view challenges as obstacles, then the challenges we face will become problems. However, if we choose to view these challenges as opportunities and stepping stones, we will be able to achieve more and accomplish our goals.

As a school counselor I am often privileged to witness examples of great courage and perseverance against overwhelming odds. The determination of my students often inspires me to challenge myself. My students remind me each day that nothing worthwhile is achieved without hardwork and perseverance. Charles Lindberg, the great aviator, once said this about success and perseverance, "Success is not measured by what a man accomplishes, but by the opposition he has encountered, and the courage with which he has maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds."

Finally, the all encompassing, pearl three, character. From the moment you stepped through the doors of Dominion High School you have participated in character discussions, read mission statements concerning character, and have listened to me spout the endless importance of character in your daily lives. Character serves as a guide to good decision making and gives us the energy to persevere through adversity. It is our compass, and the fuel that drives us. Having good character allows us to move more easily through life because it gives us the map to navigate the most arduous of trials. Your character is always there to remind you to follow the right path. Take the time to stop and evaluate the decisions you're making. Are they consistent with your character guidelines? Ask yourself; am I on the road I want to take? Listen to the echoes of the

voices you have heard at Dominion High School. I promise they will help lead you to your truth.

Your graduation is a step along the journey of life. I don't think any of you thought this day would ever come. It's time to move to the next phase, taking everything you've learned in these last four years and applying it to your future. Many of you are going on to bigger and better things. Some of you may not know exactly what you want to do or where you want to go, but one thing is certain, you have been given the tools to help achieve your dreams, and you will always hold a special place in my heart and in the history of Dominion High School. Congratulations Class of 2010!