

Hello class of 2020! Thank you for the honor to speak at your graduation.

Like you I was looking forward to one last spring in school, with that magical mix of sun and senioritis. And like you I longed for some closure: you for your years in the Hanover-Norwich school districts, and me for my 30 years of teaching. But, as Caitlin Flanagan wrote recently in the Atlantic: **history found us** . We had to pivot and plans had to change.

In March I deconstructed my classroom. Trump, Obama, and Aragorn traveled home to Lyme. I painstakingly peeled over 100 Bumper stickers off the walls, the desk, the podium, the filing cabinets. The sun-faded flags are down and stored away.

Sitting in the quiet, I came to realize my classroom was never an ideal place for the easily distracted – too much sensory stimulation. BUT there was a method to all of that madness. I felt sure that there would be days when you were not hanging on my every word as I discussed the significance of Locke's Social Contract, or got fired up about the book *Overstory* by Richard Powers.

Lucy Roback, pencil to her lip looking as if she were pondering my comments, was really wondering:  
**What if the hokey pokey IS what it is all about?**

Cam Woods, scratching his chin, considering, not my point , but if **Sugar really is a gateway drug?**

Grace Ashton shoulders back and nodding was not agreeing with me but with the bumper sticker affirmation **Reading IS Sexy**

James Roth, looking alert, was actually considering **If Eve really was framed was framed?**

These classic catch phrases aside, I have faith that loftier statements from Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, or the Dalai Llama, made their way in.

In March, on the ladder in the eerily deserted hallway – no lockers slamming, no Tage Colberg shouting across the space, I carefully extracted a bumper sticker that becomes my mantra of today: It speaks to the world we find ourselves in: A changing one. Attributed to Mahatma Gandhi it says:  
**BE the change you wish to see in the world.**

I feel sure that you are able. BUT Are you ready? Are you willing? to step out and design the future you wish for?

The natural world is redesigning while we are at home. Quiet roadways allow nature to reclaim old domains. Goats have taken over a town in the welsh countryside. Turtles find safety and comfort on empty beaches;

Elephant herds cross the highways in Thailand. The ozone hole repairs itself. Smog dissipates over cities and people in New Delhi see the Himalayas for the first time in decades. This Earth: So much awe and wonder in its power to rebuild.

Do you WISH for a greener and cleaner world?  
You can make that happen.

Inside our homes, we poke at the edges of isolation looking to re-create what it means to ACT in our new reality. People are turning their talents and vocations into gifts for others. Chefs who are famous for \$100 steaks re-script their talents to cater 100s of prepared meals for the hungry and homeless. Amateur crafters with a modicum of sewing skills turn from quilt squares to mass-producing masks. Benevolence and altruism rise.

Do you WISH for a world focused by kindness and generosity? You can make that happen.

You have been playing this game in school for years: design a plan, solve a problem, prove a hypothesis, debug a bit of code, build a robot. Your minds are gifted with a trained flexibility and responsiveness. A bendable brain is a beautiful thing in a shifting world. So many of us older folks hold firmly to patterns or traditions of the past. We need your help. Are you ready to be flexible and reshape

the picture you had drafted for your future? Are you willing to create the change you wish to see?

**History found you** in this moment. History found YOU. Change is here. The world is before you to rescript.

We, the staff at HHS, we believe in you so strongly. We know that you are able to make the changes. We hope that you are ready and that you are willing. We are rooting for you.

History has found you class of 2020. Go and make it.

We all know: Actions speaker louder than bumper stickers.

Enjoy this beautiful evening with your families. You will be missed. Good Luck and stay in touch.