

## COMMENCEMENT SPEECH – BEN DIMARCO – CLASS OF 2023

Good Evening family, friends, members of the board of education, administrators, teachers, and most importantly fellow Bombers of the Class of 2023.

Looking out, I see a very familiar group of excited faces. And it is truly an honor and a blessing to stand before you and speak, for what will be the last time we are all gathered together. Some may think that writing, preparing and ultimately giving this speech is an easy task, but I have been a nervous wreck for the time leading up to this moment. So walking out here this evening I planned, in the least weird way possible, to picture you all in your underwear, this is something that I heard on TV and from others as a way to make public speaking easier.

So, I grabbed my speech and made my way to this spot. Taking one glance into the audience, I am quickly reminded that my mother and grandmother are in attendance. Not to mention all of my teachers, and I don't really want to find out the color of Mr. Murphy's underwear. So, since that plan is out the window, I am going to take a deep breath and begin.

As Mr. Gabram said, I am Benjamin DiMarco. I have walked the halls with your sons and daughters for the past 4 years, possibly even longer. And let me tell you with confidence, time flew. It seems like we blinked and we were suddenly 9th graders, being told by everyone around us to hold on and deeply cherish all the spectacular moments that would be conceived between the walls at Kenston. Before we had time to digest that order, others said that events we have been looking forward to our whole life, like prom and senior sunrise, would soon only exist as exotic memories.

Ben-dot-dimarco-dot2023@kenstonapps-dot-org. That should sound familiar to each graduate, as this is how we have entered our school email address for as long as I can remember. No matter our grade or class title, that 2023 in the middle never felt like it would actually come. Especially when time seemed to stand still when staff members handed us desk shields in our sophomore year due to Covid-19. We typed it every time we signed into a Chromebook, yet it

was still unfathomable that 2023 would come and we would have to leave this place that's become so familiar. Walking away from the connections we've built with wonderful teachers, the countless laughs that were shared at the lunch tables in the cafeteria, or even the gum we stuck under the desks every week, only joking of course, Mr. Gabram. But in reality, all good things must come to an end.

Now we have arrived at this huge milestone in our lives, so eager to jump into the real world ahead of us. And to tell you the honest truth, I have no idea what the future holds, it's frightening, but I believe that if any of us knew exactly where we would be in the distant future we'd be holding ourselves back from reaching our fullest potential. Adversity has become second nature to us and we have formed a bond with uncomfortability. We adapted from pencil and paper assignments to living in a virtual world, using ZOOM more than ever imagined.

Junior year brought forgetting the facial features of teachers and students because of the mask mandate, and becoming best friends with hand sanitizer. And in this school year, balancing homework, work and big decisions about our futures while just trying to enjoy every last moment with classmates and teachers, knowing we may never see some of them again.

We have been told life is scary, but it doesn't have to be. Behind all the laughs and amazing moments that were created these past 13 years, were challenges that sculpted us into the people we are today, countless school nights of worrying and stressing for exams that we ended up passing with ease, or getting assigned reading from a novel, relying on spark notes the morning before the test. Times we rushed just to get to school before that tardy bell, or all the lessons we had to do in that weird vocab book we got every year in English.

My point is, you woke up day after day beating the things that could've held you back. When life asks you to do something hard or scary, realize that it's asking you to do something you've already done, maybe just in a different way or time or place. Conquer your fears and acknowledge that all these years of

school weren't just preparation for the next year, but preparation for the amazing life you have ahead of you.

So, as you are sitting there, I may have connected with you or I may have missed the mark, but I leave you with this. Some have said they are worried about the future of our nation as they imagine our generation in charge. Looking out in front of me, looking how we have handled our experiences and challenges, I am not worried at all. I am hopeful and I cannot begin to explain how excited I am to see the positive marks you leave on this world.

As you enter the next stage in your life, college, work, the Armed Forces, or whatever it may be that you choose, remember you are not invincible. I say that not to remind you of the bad that can happen but to remind you of the value of your life. Things will get tough, but God will give you opportunities left and right. Live for the right reasons, and remember that it is never too late to change for the better. Congratulations, and God bless each and every one of you. Thank you.