



The Sycamore Tree

Sycamore Academy Newsletter

July 2019



Sycamore Academy Graduation

Three of our graduating seniors along with their family and friends participated in Sycamore Academy's first ever online graduation service. Unlike traditional graduation ceremonies for brick and mortar schools, this innovative ceremony took place online May 20, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

But it wasn't your average graduation. Students were able to ask friends and relatives to watch from where they lived in many different parts of the country. The students wore graduation caps with tassels but they didn't walk across the stage. Each student participated with dedications to family and other mentors. The parents also participated with dedications to their graduating student. Finally, the teachers acknowledged all of the students for their motivation, talents, and personal gifts.

There were tears and laughter as we reminisced over the years they have attended Sycamore Academy. Jada, Julie, and Kyrzten: we are so proud of you! And you will be missed as you move on, but we know you are all going to make this world a better place. Congratulations to all of the graduating 2019 seniors!



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An Open Letter To High School Graduates

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Congratulations! Take a bow; you deserve it. I'm sure you worked very hard. High school is tough these days, and it's nearly impossible to sail through without tenacity and effort, especially if you are ambitious and have your sights set on future greatness of some kind.

By "future greatness," of course, I mean your own specific definition of this. Maybe you want to produce TV shows, or open a hair salon. Perhaps you want to join the Peace Corps or be a lobbyist. Do cancer research or car mechanics. Everyone's goals and dreams are personal and their potential to fulfill these goals are quite individual— which means there are an infinite number of definitions for "greatness." That's good news. There is no one certain path to success and happiness. It is not automatic to those who took A.P. Calculus or Honors Physics. Even though that's what you may have been made to believe these last four years.

Too many kids these days develop anxiety issues or ulcers as they try to navigate the onslaught of work they are required to do in an attempt to, supposedly, increase their chances of going to a "prestigious" college. The sheer quantity of work some students will need to accomplish (in addition to other non-academic responsibilities) often makes it difficult to remain calm, healthy and happy. Sometimes, the sheer quantity of work makes it difficult to actually learn. And for some reason, school is competitive, which I don't really understand. I've always thought it would be greatly advantageous to all of us if everyone learned. Becoming sick from stress diminishes well-being and the productivity of brain cells— since it becomes nearly impossible to think and reason effectively when you are under great stress. Additionally, experiencing habitual anxiety will not guarantee you a spot in a "prestigious" college or springboard you into career fulfillment, either. No, sadly, all it guarantees are future stomach aches and more stress. It's important, not only in high school, but in college and beyond, to foster an environment where you can remain challenged but not tortured. Don't forget, if everyone's goal is different, their path should be too.

Now that you've finished high school, it's important to appreciate what you've just accomplished. Too often you are urged to think about what's next and in doing so, are unable to appreciate the now. These days, it always seems to be about what's next. How did we get that way? I remember when my kids were in third grade and their teacher gave them two hours of homework a night with the excuse that she was preparing them for middle school. I always thought, but what about third grade? Many kids or parents feel that way about high school. From the moment they start their freshman year they are preparing for college. If you are college-bound, it's fine to think about college at some point, and consider college-prep courses, but high school should not be considered just a launch pad for college. It is an experience unto itself.

That's why it's important to remember that college is a special time. If you are embarking on college, though you may think of it as a springboard for your future professional life, never lose sight that you don't get these college years again. For most people it's four years long. As compared to your professional career which will last more than four years (hopefully!). Take advantage of all that these college years offer. Don't pressure yourself to have all the answers and decisions about your future now. (It will be difficult enough to choose what to have for dinner!) You will be continually evolving. So don't be afraid to make mistakes or change your mind, forge friendships with surprising people, become passionate about a cause that's important to you. You're going to be making many more decisions on your own, so this is where you should practice being responsible and being your authentic self.

Study subjects that you like—in most cases, things that you like you're often good at. Remember, not everyone is good at the stuff you are. Or, study things you want to be good at. If you are curious and interested in a subject or a major, that's a good indication studying it will take you to a place of happiness—which is success itself. What will you do with it after college? Many new graduates are creating their own jobs; the world is changing faster than ever and if you have an education in an area you're passionate about it, you will figure it out. Explore new subjects. College will offer you many more choices than high school. Something may pique your interest. Now's the time. How do you know if you'll like something unless you try it (remember Brussel sprouts?).

While I wish you a great future, what I really wish for you is a great summer. Because if you learn to appreciate the now, you'll always have it to reflect on. If you forever focus on tomorrow, you'll never truly have today. Congratulations and good luck!

More Sycamore Academy News - ACCREDITATION

It is our great pleasure to inform you that AdvancEd, the council on accreditation, has approved the accreditation of Sycamore Academy through 2024. This is a significant achievement! It represents the fulfillment of countless hours of hard work and the dedication of many people – most notably your staff and the members of your board and administration. This is a true testament to the collaboration, innovation, and focus on excellence of our students, parents, teachers, and staff.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) is one of six regional associations which accredit public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States. Regional accreditation began about 100 years ago and arose from a desire on the part of educational institutions to establish standards of quality. SACS CASI and the other five regional associations in the United States grant "institutional accreditation" after a comprehensive self study followed by an on-site evaluation of the programs and services of the total institution. This means that all diploma or degree programs and educational activities offered by the institution are covered by the institution's accreditation.

Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental process which plays an important role in developing and maintaining the high quality of education in this country. We are grateful for all of the parents, students, and teachers that participated in the accreditation process.



From the Editor

Graduation is officially behind us. But what a great graduation it was! Summer is in full swing, and it's the Fourth of July. I hope you are having a great summer and appreciating the now! Life is a marathon, not a quick sprint. To survive and thrive, we have to pace ourselves and take care of ourselves. Hopefully this summer you are finding time to take care of you and making many memories with those you love.

The first day of school is right around the corner. Focus on the now as you enjoy the rest of summer.

See you soon!

Lori

