



# PINGRY

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS  
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In the French language, the verbs “partir” and “sortir” mean, respectively, “to leave” and “to go out”. Partir is to leave without the intention of coming back, as in “please gather your belongings before exiting the auditorium.” Sortir is to go out for just a bit, as in “tonight, I will go out with my friends. Mom, don’t wait up for me.” Pingry isn’t the kind of place from which you can simply partir. Truly leaving, severing ties with the literally hundreds of teachers, classmates, mutual friends, and collective experiences we’ve found in its classrooms, its hallways, and its wide-open spaces, would be impossible. Not only would it be impossible, but the mere thought of it hurts me from the inside out.

Those of us who’ve bled Pingry blue since Kindergarten can surely attest to my personal feeling. While they may not relish those on-campus lunches and Friday morning speakers like they once did, I am sure that their time here has shaped them in ways they could not possibly know. Specifically, it was the people here who shaped them—the ones seated beside me in black, of course, but also those surrounding them in robes of blue and white.

Through the front doors on any Monday morning, the first person you see is probably Mrs. Hearst. She’ll give you a hearty hello, possibly a handshake, and most likely a detention if your skirt is too short. Continuing toward the cafeteria, Mrs. Peake sits at her table, waiting with a smile and a wave to sign you in for your first period free. Past the college counseling offices, where the majority of us spent the majority of our time between November and April, an encouraging look from Ms. Chatterji would assure us that, yes, we would matriculate somewhere. On the other side of the building, Mr. Keating holds down the fort near the trophy cases. His therapy sessions are free and his sage advice and breadth of classic movie trivia are priceless. Once you hit the athletic wing, the competitive spirit is palpable, and fans and players alike

flock to the weight room to get in shape. Coach Scott will always have a lifting regimen and some great one-liners waiting for you.

The playful, intellectual back-and-forth with our teachers we’ve been so lucky to have is something we may never encounter again. Three years from now, in a survey course on American Literature from 1900 to the present, someone will reference Jay Gatsby. We’ll be instantly transported back to junior-year English, where our teacher painted a vivid picture of his sprawling Long Island estate and the parties lavish enough to rival P. Diddy’s. Next month at a summer camp, the director will be calling roll. More than anything else, we’ll be tempted to respond to our names with a “HOO-RAH” straight from the heart. From now on, every time we see a Pingry sticker on the back window of a car, we’ll smile in remembrance of all the time we spent within its walls.

Like I said, we learned from our teachers. But even more, we learned from each other. At the beginning of this year, Mrs. Lionetti told a roomful of anxious, preoccupied seniors that by the end of this year we would come to the shocking realization that we had gotten to know only a fraction of our classmates. The frenzy and excitement of high school would have blinded us to the scores of exceptional people around us and we would seriously be missing out if in our final year we didn’t do all that we could to reach out to them. Now, it’s June, and she was right. While I know that I haven’t made great friends with every single student on this stage, I have learned something, be it small or be it large, from all of them. Connections were made in foreign language classes, studying for history tests, and over casual cafeteria conversation. There are 123 of us in this graduating class; even one student missing would leave an unfixable void in this crazy, ambitious crowd. We draw strength

and inspiration from one another, and owe many of our successes to the students sitting to our left and right. We have made the Pingry experience for each other.

So now we're leaving, but we'll never really leave. As graduates, the passion and drive and fighting spirit that Pingry has instilled in us will carry us throughout our lives. We will live by the honor and decency and respect that our teachers have taught us, and we will laugh and we will love and we will party with the lasting friends that we have made.

The poet e.e. cummings wrote, "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." To the Class of 2008: Go out and become yourselves. May you make all your dreams reality.

Thank you.