



Graduation Speech to MRH High School Class of 2009

By Dr. Linda Henke - May 29, 2009

My dear class of 2009. These past few days have been hard for those of us in the central office. We have missed you—your exuberance, your stories, your hugs. Devin, we have even missed your hooping and hollering. We know it is time for us to let you go. And we will do so...because we know you are ready. You have grown and matured in the heart of our MRH community. The Lakota Sioux have a special name for places like MRH. Tiospaye. A tiospaye is an extended family where everyone joins hands to insure that all are cared for, all receive what they need.

You are an amazing group of young people—not just for all you have accomplished—but for all the challenges you have overcome. When I stand before you I see individuals who have faced hardships that would have paralyzed ordinary people—yet you have approached adversity with courage and perseverance. In part this is a result of the tiospaye of MRH —of the teachers and administrators and custodians and bus drivers and secretaries who have joined hands with your families and friends to help you when things were difficult. In part it is because of your commitment to one another. You have lifted each other up when times have been dark. You have cared when it would have been so easy to look away.

In the end...your accomplishments these past four years are yours. You have set high goals for yourselves in the classroom, on the field on the track and on court, on the stage and on the page. And you have learned the power of rigor—of putting every ounce of energy and skill and understanding into meeting those goals. The results have been breath-taking. You have helped to make a fine high school into an outstanding one. You have served as role models and leaders for the younger students. You have made us all very proud.

As you move out into the world, my hope is that you will take with you the lessons of our tiospaye...that you will remember in your brain and in every fiber of your being what accomplishing a difficult goal feels like.

But I hope we have taught you other lessons, as well. Remember the power of compassion and empathy... that our community by its very definition must care for all who need our help. You must be gentle warriors fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves.

I expect you to change the world...starting tomorrow. You can sleep in...(after all, it is graduation) but then you need to get busy. We will be cheering you on. And remember...no matter where you go or what you do...you will always be the sons and daughters of MRH.

Congratulations. We love you.