

2017 Graduation: Head of School Remarks

David Brooks, the conservative columnist for *The New York Times*, and author of the book *The Road to Character*, wrote in 2011 what he called *The Life Reports*. He collected essays from septuagenarians reflecting on their lives and what had been most important to them.

Brooks wrote, “Resilience is a central theme in these essays. I don’t think we remind young people enough that life is hard. Bad things happen.”

Class of 2017, by simply being here today, you as a group have already demonstrated your resilience. At the start of your high school career, when Hovensa closed and many of your closest friends and classmates left the island... you bounced back. When a beloved faculty member was dismissed and another passed away, and two recent graduates passed away as well... you bounced back. When classmates were expelled and suspended for disciplinary reasons this winter, you bounced back. And when just one month ago two students of ours were the victims of a horrific assault... you bounced back.

Over the next four years, whether you are in St. Thomas, Colorado Springs, Chapel Hill, or Ecuador, you are going to be tested more. A lot more.

Intellectually. Emotionally. Physically. Socially. Culturally. Spiritually. And remember that when you hit that roadblock or get knocked off your feet—and you will—you’ll have a choice: You can drop your head and quit, or you can bounce back. Deep inside of each of you, thanks to your experience at Good Hope Country Day School, thanks to the hard work of our stellar faculty, thanks to the loving support and encouragement of every family member and friend in this audience as well as some who couldn’t be here today, and thanks to your experience living in the rich diversity of St. Croix, you already have what it takes to bounce back and pursue the life you want.

Martin Luther King, Jr. gave an address at Spellman College, which he concluded by quoting the Langston Hughes’ poem “Mother to Son.”

I’m not going to read the beautiful poem itself, but simply King’s conclusion:

“Life for none of us has been a crystal stair, but there is something we can learn from the broken grammar of that mother. If you can’t fly, run. If you can’t run, walk. If you can’t walk, crawl; but by all means, keep moving.”

Class of 2017, besides “bounce back” and “keep moving,” you now have two simple, but important, responsibilities – the same ones I shared with the Class of 2016:

1. Use everything that you have learned to be the best YOU that you can be.
2. Give back to the School and give back to St. Croix so that others can have the same opportunities that you’ve had.

We have the highest of expectations for all of you. Thank you and congratulations.

The Class of 2017 will now sing its class song from Moana, with Mr. Josh Canning accompanying on guitar.