

Good Afternoon and welcome to the commencement exercises of the fourth graduating class of Ridgeview Classical School.

Ridgeview was opened in the Autumn of 2001. Ridgeview, for those of you who do not know, is a charter school with the specific mission to educate students in the classical tradition. Like many charter schools, it was opened by parents and guided by the vision of a core of men and women who wanted a real academic education for their children, and who were having trouble getting that education from other schools in our area.

Like ALL other charter school it is a school of choice and our students are here because they either want to be here, or their parents want them to be here. They aren't here because they live in some artificially zoned attendance area. They purposefully CHOOSE Ridgeview, and then the work begins.

Even before the charter was granted, this goal, this ideal of academic excellence seemed too aggressive. Students are used to getting easy "A"s, we were told. They won't want to come. Students won't like it because the school won't have all the bells and whistles that a regular high school has. You won't find teachers who can teach in the classical tradition. There were more concerns and many hurdles, real and imagined.

This year the objections were particularly strident. The school came under a lot of criticism - most of it unfair, much of it rooted in equivocation, prevarication, or fabrication. The rudest comment from detractors was a slam at our students..... the use of the term "Ridgeview Material" as a pejorative. I'd like to clear up exactly what Ridgeview Material is.....would the students of RCS, past and present, please stand? (please be seated).... This is what hard work and dedication look like.....it looks like our children. This is what courage and perseverance look like....like our children.

Ridgeview Material is students who don't give up, who do their homework even over the summer, students who aren't referring to board games or baseball when they talk about Milton and Dante. ...it is students who look forward to reading Chaucer and Shakespeare and Newton and Virgil. And speaking of Virgil, this school has the finest Latin Department in the northern half of this state. And this year, Ridgeview was rated as the best high school in the state of Colorado.

Naturally we are very proud of that and of our incredible teachers. But the thing we are most proud of is our students, their dedication to learning, and their desire to improve themselves in a way that has been available to discerning men throughout the ages - by learning the lessons of history, by listening to the thoughts and ideas of the great minds of the past, by absorbing the truth and beauty of our western culture.

It has been a great honor to stand on this stage with these young men and women and their teachers. Thank you.