

Welcome
Mrs. Kim Miller

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Ridgeview Classical Schools, I welcome you to our fifth graduation. I want to point out a few special guests in our audience today: Denise Mund of the Colorado Department of Education and Kathryn Knox, Liberty Common School's first headmaster, who were instrumental in helping the Ridgeview founders, and my dear friend, Marilyn Burns, who gave me a copy of *Cultural Literacy* in the mid-nineties. And this is where it all led to: this awesome group of graduates, two of whom are my twin daughters. This class is special. It has been a blessing to know some of these families and their graduates, some since 1997 when they entered the third grade at Liberty Common School. All of these graduating seniors have accomplished much, whether they have been with us for two years or six years.

The word on the street may be that Ridgeview is only for the brightest of students, but this is not true. The truth is that these graduates have become the brightest of all students because they have courage and perseverance. The road ahead of them was steep, but with guts they climbed, fell, got up, and kept going. These students worked hard, really hard. These students have lived what the founders of this school believe, and what Goethe said: If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain as he is— but if you treat an individual as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.

High—sometimes seemingly impossible—expectations could be called the secret weapon of Ridgeview, but truly the secret weapon is in hiring the brightest and best, those who knew how to work hard: teachers who can be emulated. The original Ridgeview hiring committee and Board of Directors certainly accomplished this in hiring Dr. Moore. He in turn did the same in hiring the stellar faculty you see behind me. Soon after hiring Dr. Moore, he told the Board of Directors that Ridgeview would be the best school, and he said this during our first year when our students ate in tents and the only private place to meet was by the garbage dumpster. The Ridgeview high school ranked second in Colorado the first year, and we have been the first-ranked high school in the state for the past two years. Recently we were named one of the top 53 of 4,000 charter schools nationally.

Smart teachers and hard working students almost sum up what Ridgeview stands for, but that is not good enough. Ridgeview must create virtuous young women and men. These students have made mistakes, but they have learned from them. Well, most of them have. I know these Ridgeview graduates will not only be the great leaders of the future; they are my hope for tomorrow.

Now, I have one request of the graduates, their families, and friends: remember Ridgeview is a public charter school. Charter schools are under siege and Ridgeview is under attack, as are all options that are not part of the school district's and teacher-union's plans. Truly educating all students is war, a war for the hearts and minds of the young people of today. We all must be active participants in this war. Please use your voice and your vote to let our legislators know that we will not settle for the established system that espouses mediocrity. We want choices when it comes to educating our children. We must demand the best.

Luckily, these graduates will be politicians, doctors, lawyers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and, most importantly, the teachers of the future. These graduates have learned how to look at things from all sides, and they have learned that what they read or hear in the media is likely not complete or accurate. These graduates know how to discern truth. Political correctness is not their compass.

These graduates will leave today beginning many journeys, changing the world for the better. Thank you, parents, for putting up with us, with too much homework and too much politics,

whether in the school, in the district, or in the state. Thank you for entrusting your students to us. The Board of Directors of Ridgeview loves and is proud of your kids.

Don't forget Ridgeview. Come back and visit.