

## **Remarks by 8<sup>th</sup> Grader Faith McElwaine Lower School Moving Up Ceremony 2016**

My nine years here at Montgomery School have been some of the best of my life, full of unforgettable memories and people. I'm so grateful for the community at Montgomery that has been there for me during this time because without their support and help, I probably wouldn't be standing here talking to you today. I will miss how Montgomery doesn't just teach you subjects, but teaches you real life lessons that you will take with you forever. Another thing I love and will miss most about Montgomery is the freedom they give you to be who you are, to create ideas, and to be trusted with the responsibility of independence. This school has shaped me into the person I am, which is something for which I will always be grateful.

Montgomery School has given me so much opportunity and opened up many doors for me. You may not realize it now, but one day when you're looking back and reflecting on your time here, it will hit you. When it does, all you're going to think is, is it really over? In the past, it has always just seemed so far away and out of reach, like it would never really happen. Even in my eighth grade year, I still didn't comprehend this moment. Now I just feel like time went by in a blur, and part of me wishes I could just go back to being the innocent little kindergartener that walked through the door on the first day of school all that time ago.

My childhood has taken place at this school, and in a way leaving somewhat represents the end of that. However, I can't close this chapter of my life without sharing some of my favorite memories at this school. Since I have been here for nine years, there are so many memories that I love, but I only have time to narrow it down to a few favorites from middle school. My memories about middle school will also give all of you an insight into what's ahead for you as you become

middle school students. Most of the fun memories I have are from the trips that we've taken as a grade because that's when I get to see everyone's true personalities shine through.

At Echo Hill in sixth grade, everyone had a terrible experience. It was raining the entire time, and we weren't allowed to have our phones. There were six people in a small tent, a "sharing circle" between every meal, and one giant shower that all the girls had to share. There were no real bathrooms, and no lights at night to direct you. Also one day we had to go milk cows at five in the morning. Now looking back on it, it's one of my all-time favorite memories because it was so bad it's actually funny. I wish the eighth grade could go and do it now because I think it would be even worse, turning out to be even more hilarious. Sixth grade students now visit Washington D.C. and Virginia instead, and I've heard that they loved their trip this year.

The next trip, in seventh grade was when we went to Florida. In Florida we went to Disney World (on my birthday), swimming with manatees, snorkeling in the Rainbow River, and more. Then our final trip this year to Canada happened weeks ago. The drive to Canada is thirteen hours up, and ten hours back, so in that time we definitely got to know each other a little bit better. This trip was filled with a lot of free time, ghost tours, sit down meals, beautiful views, and cirque du soleil. I will always remember these trips, and the fun times that I spent with my friends.

My fellow classmates have made this crazy journey a time I will always remember. They have stuck by me when I needed someone, they have stood up for me, and have taught me many life lessons. They have made me feel loved, have treated me with pure kindness, have made me laugh so hard that I cried, and made me so happy throughout all these years. The memories that I share with them will be the ones that I tell my children, and the ones that I will think about when I'm having a bad day and need to escape. The fact that making these memories with all of them is over is too

**Commented [1]:** I think this should read more about reflecting on her classmates instead of "to my fellow classmates..." Maybe here too she can address how important it is to stand by each other and perhaps even acknowledge that students should be open to making new friends each year?

hard to think about right now, but over time I will accept it. Just know that I will never forget our times together, and I hope they won't either. I struggle to think what I will do without each and every one of them in high school. All eighteen of them bring special and unique qualities to the table, and sometimes when they blend there can be chaos, but mostly there can be fun times had by all. I know that some of us will be lifelong friends, and I know that some of us will not. I know that some of us will keep in touch, and some of us will not. However, I do know that we will always have this school to bind us together, and that is something we can hold onto.

Now it's officially time for my adventure to come to a close. My hard work is paying off, and I am jumping to the next stepping stone in life called high school. Your journey in middle school is just beginning. One day, you'll be feeling as I do now. I know that I am excited to see all of my friends succeed in high school and beyond. I am excited to follow my dreams, and to experience new things with new people. I am excited to expand my knowledge, and live in the moment. I am excited to live my new adventure, and hope you are too. I wish you all the best in your next step, in middle school. I hope that you enjoy your experience as much as I did mine.