

## **“Circles, Squares and Triangles: How High School Has Shaped Us”**

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**Abigail Engbrecht- Overcoming Obstacles** Seniors, our world has a way of placing obstacles in our path based on who you are. It takes things such as your gender, your race, your age, and your religion and tries to use them against you- to keep you from what you want. And when that doesn't seem like enough there also manages to be smaller obstacles that you face. Lack of time, money, knowledge, skill, and interest all come along to try and dissuade you from continuing to try and reach the goals you've set for yourself. Thankfully, there are tools you can use and lessons you can learn to help you navigate the treacherous waters of adversity. Being able to be persistent in the face of failure. Continuing to educate yourself and share that knowledge with others. Learning from the past but never letting it stop you from looking to the future and chasing what you want; and finally- being true to yourself- because it is that self that is going to change the world. If I'm being honest, these lessons sound standard and cheesy but they're true and that's what we so often forget. We've got our whole lives to dive further into these concepts and test them out, but seeing as we can't look into the future and use that knowledge, what we can do right now is take these ideas and the lives we've already lived and use them to shape us into who we really are without letting anything stop us.

**Cayla Peterson- Failure** And believe me when I say that there are plenty of things that would try to stop us and the progress that we make every day. Despite that, I'm a person who doesn't really believe in failure. I think you either succeed in what you do or you learn. Failure implies defeat and surrender in the face of a challenge. It's a huge success to be able to stand here as valedictorian, but just like anybody else whos earned a success, we have all faced our share of failures - and I can guarantee we haven't seen the last of them - but you can't ever let it get the best of you. It's impossible to immediately succeed in every venture you find yourself on - keyword there being immediately. Whether it's on that test you spent hours studying for in high school or applying for the job that you thought was your destiny once we're out in the world by ourselves. We need to fail and more importantly we need to embrace that failure instead of fearing it to be able to grow as individuals. It's how we learn different ways to motivate ourselves, how to roll with the punches and fight back, and it's through our own failures that we can learn how to support others in theirs. To all of the underclassmen watching this, learn how to fail in high school so it's easier later on. To all of my fellow seniors, it has been a joy to spend these last four years with you, and I hope that any failure you might encounter as we all move into the world is met with the greatest motivation you've got. Best of luck to you all, and thank you for a crazy and unforgettable four years.

**Jessica Gehrke- Persistence** Failure has shown us that high school doesn't always go as we expect it should. It would throw anything and everything at us, it may have seemed like it was testing us, which it was, with actual paper/pencil- or online tests, which seemed to be pointless at the time, the only thing they appeared to accomplish was stressing us out. All of our failures during school built persistence within each and every one of us. High school did not only stress us out, but it has shaped us into the people who we are today, and who we will need to be to succeed in life. We all came from different ways of life, therefore, we all learn differently and we all grow differently. But we do share a few relatable characteristics, we share all the valuable skills which were taught as a result of our actions, choices, and many times through failures we made along the way. These skills will actually be used outside of school. Some of us probably didn't even realize, but we all learned persistence. Whether we used it to complete assignments at 11:58 the night they were due, or to complete all the applications for jobs, colleges, and scholarships. Persistence got all of us through high school. It will also get us through life, getting us through all the tests that life throws at us, and allowing us to accomplish, and appreciate all the life lessons that come our way.

**Erica Johnsrud- Never Stop Learning** The lessons we have learned in high school are over, but the experience of learning itself will last us a lifetime. I'm sure at some point this year, each of us has experienced senioritis. Where we focused more on what was next, than making the most of each moment we had here. The neverending formulas and facts seemed insignificant compared to our exciting futures. But after high school, it will be up to us to push ourselves to reach our full potential. The vast amount of knowledge we've gained over these past four years is incredible. We all remember the feeling of mastering a skill in a sport, finally hitting a new note on your instrument, or acing a test you worked hard to prepare for. Each accomplishment and milestone has motivated us to get to where we are today. I hope in life we can all experience accomplishments like this again. What we are capable of learning goes far beyond lessons taught in high school. I encourage you to always look for opportunities to learn and grow as much as we have in these past four years. To let each day be driven by the spirit of curiosity. We've all heard the phrase knowledge is power. Let us live our lives to the fullest with the mindset to never stop learning.

**Hunter Williamette- Looking Towards the Future** As we embark on our separate journeys we should remember the people that have shaped us. Whether that was a classmate, teacher, or a friendly neighbor, they've all had a part in helping define who you are. We have been trying to find out who we want to be since we were young, but this idea is always changing. What we experience on a day to day basis impacts how we see the world around us and how we present ourselves to it. These experiences have shaped into being the best person we can be, but our lives aren't close to being in their final form, they've only just begun to take shape. Our class will always be improving on ourselves to be the best we can be because, frankly, that is just who we are. As we look towards our futures, we will continue to have these experiences and constantly change to become our new best selves. We will encounter challenges in our futures, but it will be nothing like we haven't faced before. The class of 2020 is unique in that we entered the world during a time of struggle for our country, and will graduate during a worldwide pandemic, but this hasn't stopped us from achieving what we want to do and ultimately reaching our dreams.

**Madison Klecker- Chasing Dreams** Over these past four years, we have been preparing for our futures. That doesn't necessarily mean just through school, but through our experiences in life. No matter the path we are taking, I'm sure all of us have had some sort of dream. A dream college, a dream job, or even just a dream that we graduate. Well, here we are. We made it to that day where we were supposed to walk across a stage and receive a diploma. Instead, we are watching from the comfort of our homes. For some of us, that dream we have had since we walked into our first day of kindergarten has been crushed. Life doesn't always work the way that we plan it to. Don't let this define your dreams in the future. Go out and be that person you said you were going to be. Remember that feeling when you decided what you were going to do with your life, and if you haven't decided yet then give yourself some time. A song from the Disney movie "Cinderella" says "A dream is a wish your heart makes". Listen to your heart and remember that no matter how life shapes us, our dreams are never out of reach.

**Chau Truong- Finding Your Identity** When you're chasing your dreams you find yourself along the way. Identity is composed of memories, experiences, relationships, and morals that creates one's sense of self. In easier terms, it's the qualities that make you... well... you. Finding out who you are lies much deeper than simply looking at your reflection, that's why the challenge is difficult. In high school, we are often divided into categories. You have your star-athletes, your musicians, your theater kids, your science geeks, your fashion icons and social media kings and queens. Although we may be separated into typical high school cliques we all share the same hopes and desires to find our true selves. We may feel content with our high school identities, but the true quest to finding who you are, never really ends. Our identities are ever-changing. No matter how good or bad these 4 years may have felt, they do not predispose your future. I want to congratulate all of you for finishing high school and conquering all stereotypes and prejudice others had of you. As we flip to the next chapter, I'm asking all of you to take on the real world with an open heart, an open mind, and an optimistic attitude. High School has shaped you into the person you are today, but who you are tomorrow can only be shaped by yourself.