

Kelsey Neth

Dr. Jungmann, school board members, family and friends, classmates: it is a great honor to speak to all of you on this momentous day. But you may be wondering who I am. What authority do I have? Well, I am the record keeper.

For the past four years, I have been on the yearbook staff, editing pages upon pages that contain our memories from high school. Being in that role, one takes notice of the legacy their class leaves behind. I know what has defined us throughout the years because it was my job to document it all. I am the record keeper.

This year, the book's theme was Redefined. Because, during our senior year, everything changed. If any of you read through some of the text in the yearbook (which I hope you did), you'll know that the staff focused on recording all of the monumental changes that occurred this year, our last year. It was just our luck that we came so close to leaving high school only for everything to be turned upside down. We had to deal with changes like the introduction of Liberty Hour and therefore having to manage our time much more efficiently. We had to learn the complexities of a Macbook, park in assigned spots for a while, and report to tutoring. We also had to deal with not two younger grades like our predecessors, but three. Three grades full of kids who didn't understand the things we had come to know, sometimes annoying us with their innocence. Our school was not only redefined but we were redefined.

Among my recordkeeping, that's something special that I've noticed about our class: we are constantly faced with the challenge of redefining ourselves. We redefined kindergarten when we were the first group to be there all day long. We grew up in a redefined world after 9/11. After we leave, every student remaining in the school system will have no memories of America before that terrible, terrible day. Because at the youngest age likely to remember, we had to redefine ourselves knowing that the world wasn't really as safe as our parents had made it seem. We've dealt with multiple boundary changes and new schools that separated us from our friends. And then senior year we had to redefine our definition of school right before we were destined to leave it. Through all of the years and all of these challenges that are unique to our class, and our class only, we have grown stronger.

So now, moving on from high school, we will be ready for whatever comes our way. We know what it takes to adapt, to survive, to make the best out of a difficult situation. We know that life's challenges can't knock us down if we don't let them. We know that, wherever we may go from here, we can redefine ourselves. All of this "real world" stuff that adults talk about, the class of 2014 is ready for it. Bring it on.