

*Matt Calhoun*

Good Evening Dr. Thurman, Members of the Cabot School Board, Mr. Hawkins, Administration, Faculty, Family, Friends, and Fellow Graduates of the Class of 2013. It is a privilege and honor to be speaking to you today.

As I reflect on my educational beginnings as a kindergarten student in Mrs. Kathy Bays' class at Northside Elementary, I am thankful for the teachers, coaches, and principals who have had a positive impact on my life and taught me much during the past 13 years in Cabot Public Schools. Not only have we learned facts and calculations, we have been challenged to develop analytical and critical thinking skills, a zeal for learning, and the motivation and knowledge to succeed. As we begin our journey into the next chapter of our lives, having curiosity, preparing a goal-driven plan, and embracing each challenge and persevering are critical next steps in our mission towards success.

What do Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Steve Jobs have in common? All were curious, innovative, and asked questions. Some inventions save people's lives while others improve them. Some innovations, such as light bulbs, automobiles, the internet, iPhones, GPS, and social networking have forever changed human history. I challenge you to ask questions and listen to others. There is always more to learn. It's about being curious and turning your ideas into reality. Like Al Gore, you too can invent your "internet".

Whether you are going to college, joining the military, applying for a job, or exploring your passion, preparing a road map and goal driven plan is a vital first step. The sky is the limit to what you can achieve if you establish a plan and set your mind to it. When setting goals, it's imperative to set the bar high but not try to accomplish everything all at once. It's like learning to drive; if you try to master it too quickly, you run the risk of ending up in a roadside ditch. However, by setting small goals and planning along the way, you're more likely to be successful.

Determination and perseverance are paramount to achieving one's goals. "The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." (Vince Lombardi). I'll never forget, earlier this year when I received a "B" - in Mrs. Darwin's AP Calculus class on my 9 week's report card. I brought the report card home to my mom, and she placed it on the refrigerator for my viewing pleasure every time I reached in to grab a soda. She used this report card - not to praise me for all the other "A"'s in my classes, but instead used this as an opportunity to highlight the one "B" I made when she believed that I was capable of earning an "A". Although this method seemed a little strange and unfair to me at first, it provided me with the incentive and determination to work harder, persevere, and achieve that "A" for the semester. And I hate to say this - but Mom - you were right-for once!

I'll end tonight with an excerpt from my favorite author - Dr. Seuss.

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And You are the one who'll decide where to go.

Thank you and good night!