

Opening Assembly Remarks

Aug. 28, 2018

A warm welcome to all of you! Whatever you've been doing this summer, welcome to the 2018-19 school year at Thetford Academy.

Thetford Academy's mission is to **celebrate the worth of all students, nurture your strengths, and challenge you to fulfill your potential.**

The 2018-19 school year marks **our 200th year**. We'll be celebrating our **Bicentennial** from the opening of school until graduation — with a special birthday party on **Founders' Day, Feb. 8, 2019.**

This morning, I'd like to begin by recognizing our new teachers and staff members — two this year:

Brian Johnson, our new Clara Martin Center counselor, who will be here three days per week.

John Luce, choral music director, middle school drama teacher, and musical theater teacher, who's coming to us from South Burlington High School.

I want to thank those of you who have worked throughout the summer to get our physical plant ready for the new year: John Brown, Mark Gurney, Dean Kellogg, Scott Smith and Mike Wells.

Thanks also to those who have been working all summer to get ready for your return, especially Gloria Thurston Konicki, our office administrator.

This year, we have **69 new students** from towns across the Upper Valley. We welcome you all to our School, and expect that soon you'll feel at home at Thetford Academy.

Let's hear from our six classes.

First, our 7th graders, the **class of 2024**, with **36** students from Sharon, Strafford, and Thetford. Congratulations to the Class of 2024! [CLASS CHEER]

Today we also welcome back the **Class of 2023**, our 8th grade, with **36** students, with two new students from Thetford. Congratulations to the Class of 2023! [CLASS CHEER]

We welcome to the **Class of 2022**, our freshman class, where 20 new students join 35 returning students to form a class of **55** students. Our new 9th graders are from Chelsea, Corinth, Lyme, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, and South Korea. Congratulations to the Class of 2022! [CLASS CHEER]

We welcome back the **Class of 2021**, our sophomore class, with **59** members, including **seven** new students, all from Chelsea. Congratulations to the Class of 2021! [CLASS CHEER]

We welcome back the **Class of 2020**, our junior class, with **64** members, including four new students from Chelsea, Hartland, and Lyme. Congratulations to the Class of 2020! [CLASS CHEER]

And finally, today we welcome back the **Class of 2019**, our senior class, with **56** members, including **three** new students from Chelsea and Corinth. Congratulations to the Bicentennial Class of 2019! [CLASS CHEER]

Over the years, our student culture has been what has made TA a great place to go to school. We're a community of learners with a heart. We're a nurturing community that turns out graduates who care about others.

We demonstrate that we care about others, when we take the time to thank them after they do something kind, or when we build them up when they're feeling lonely or sad.

If we tease someone for missing a shot or for having a bad hair day, if we judge people for what they wear or how they talk, if we cynically make fun

of others behind their backs, even when we convince ourselves that we are just kidding, we are contributing to beating people down.

When I think about things I have done that I most regret, it's talking about someone behind their back, only to realize, too late, that they overheard what I said about them. I'm sure that many of us have made that mistake and felt badly about it.

I urge you to be "roof people, not basement people," as a friend of mine used to say with a smile on his face. Aim to lift people up to the roof, not to pull them down to the dungeon. Stay outwardly positive, even when you're feeling down. What you say about other people, positive or negative, can make a huge impact on them, for better or for worse.

This is a year of celebration. A 200th birthday is a VERY BIG DEAL. Let's be sure to celebrate our wonderful school and our wonderful people, every day. Let's build each other up in our words and in our actions. When we're positive, we feel better about ourselves, and those who are around us feel better as well. The power of positive thinking goes a long way!

Our quote for the year, and this year's theme, explores how we can all reach new heights by being positive:

It is not your aptitude but your attitude that will determine your altitude."

Two well-known Americans are given credit for this saying: Zig Ziglar and Jesse Jackson.

Zig Ziglar, a Republican from Alabama, came from a very poor background, which he overcame through a spirit of positivity and humility. He became one of the greatest motivational speakers of the 20th century, and published a bestseller still in print called *See You at the Top*.

Jesse Jackson, a Democrat from South Carolina, ran for president twice in 1984 and '88, and has been one of the most powerful voices of the American civil rights movement.

Both men had a deep faith in humankind's ability to accomplish great things when people work together for the common good. It's actually kind of cool that the quote is totally non-political and has been said by people on both sides of the aisle.

Once again,

It is not your aptitude but your attitude that will determine your altitude."

My hope is that you will enjoy this rather lighthearted quote with an uplifting, motivational message, and that we can all be reminded of how critical it is that we all lift one another up on a day-in, day-out basis.

So, this year, let's celebrate Thetford Academy's 200th birthday, as we also celebrate the unique worth of every person we come into contact with. An attitude of celebrating others rather than boasting about ourselves will help ensure that we soar!