

ELIZA VEAL

FIFTH GRADE CLOSING CEREMONY END-OF-YEAR MESSAGE

Good morning. My name is Eliza Veal. Thank you for coming to Frederica Academy's Lower School Fifth Grade Closing Ceremony. Before I begin, will everyone please take a minute to look around the room at your teachers, administrators, parents and fellow classmates ... Wow. We did it! We graduated from Lower School in the midst of a global pandemic. Frederica Academy has done an amazing job of making this school year as normal as possible.

So many parts of our country and this world were not able to have school this year. Frederica worked diligently to make this school year possible. Mr. Hutchinson, Mrs. Pruitt, Mrs. Smith and Ms. Myles ... we simply cannot thank you enough. Would everyone give our teachers and administrators a round of applause? I for one am grateful I was not doing virtual school at home with my mom this year! Truthfully, my parents were thrilled I was not at home doing virtual school!

I was asked to speak to you today about my Frederica experience and what this school means to me.



Honestly, it is difficult for me to put into words what Frederica means to me. When I think about this school, the word that comes to my mind over and over is FAmily. All of us in the room have our biological family. But we are really fortunate because we have another FAmily – our school FAmily. As a Fifth grader graduating Lower School, this notion of FAmily means something. Being a FA Knight means that I am a part of a larger FAmily. A FAmily bigger than my own. A FAmily that celebrates when I succeed. A FAmily that is sad when I'm sad. A FAmily that is there for me no matter what.

I became a part of the Frederica FAmily in Pre-Kindergarten. I was fired up about the little green bag Mrs. Manor gave me with my name on it. I could not believe I could finally go to school with my big brothers and my older cousins. And . . . I was able to wear the uniform!

Kindergarten was spectacular. Mrs. Manor and Mrs. Squire made learning so much fun. They worked tirelessly to keep us busy, attentive, and engaged. We enjoyed eating our lunches in our classroom. One of the highlights from that year was our field trip to the Fair in Brunswick. Where else can you eat cotton candy and pet farm animals during a school day?

Fast forward to First Grade – it was epic. Mrs. Floyd and Mrs. Dyer instilled in us the love of reading. This is a gift that is immeasurable. Who could forget our field trip to Epworth dressed as Pilgrims and Indians as we acted out the First Thanksgiving? And that delicious feast? I remember a gigantic sugar cookie with my name on it. Mrs. Floyd loved this celebration so much – it was her signature event. She made history come alive for us and I know we all miss her dearly.

Second Grade was truly a wonderful year. Our dedicated teachers, Mrs. Schneider and Mrs. Albright, took us to the treetops with the Magic Treehouse series. This, along with Flat Stanley, helped us realize that there was a world outside of south Georgia. And who can forget Pirate Day? We enjoyed learning all about Pirates. And then we got to dress like pirates for an entire day!

Third Grade was awesome – I finally had one of my brother’s favorite teachers, Mrs. Waters. She was a legend in my eyes. We also had a new teacher named Mrs. Day that year. She transformed the FA summer programs and the KiX afterschool program.

At the end of the year, we had a big pizza party at school. Our third-grade lives could be found in an enormous pizza box we could actually take home. We felt pretty cool as Third Graders because now we could get on stage in Hamilton Hall and take part in morning meeting.

In Fourth grade, life got real (in more ways than one). Our fearless leaders, Mr. Roberts and Mrs. Squire, were responsible for giving us grades for the first time, yikes! The world as we knew it also shut down in March of our Fourth grade year. I think we all can agree that those were dark days.

I remember going to Hamilton Hall on a Thursday night in March to watch the Fifth Grade play. I did not return to Frederica until August of the following school year. I never thought I would say in an audible voice over and over again that I actually MISSED school. But I did. I know we all did.

Finally it was time for Fifth grade – and Hallelujah we all came back to school!!! Back to FAmily. Friendships grew deeper during our Fifth Grade year. We did things differently this year But at least we did them. And we were thrilled to be in school again. A huge highlight was that we were able to perform in the Fifth Grade play.

Thank you Mrs. Smith, Ms. Myles and Mrs. Rolland for your hard work, creativity, and patience. Camp Ebenezer was probably my favorite, and I’m thankful we able to go. And finally, May Day ... at last it was our turn to do the May Pole dance!

In closing, I want to share a personal story with you. My cousin, Luke Veal, graduated from Frederica Academy almost two weeks ago. My family and I attended his Baccalaureate Service and his Graduation ceremony.

It is difficult to describe how special these two events are.

As I sat in the audience at graduation, my eyes kept darting to the quote engraved above the high school entrance. Above the doors of Corn Hall it is written, “To whom much is given, much is expected.” These words mean a lot to me. God has given us all so much. So have our families. So has this school.

To my classmates, the Class of 2028, let’s always remember how much we have been given in life. And, let us remember that much is expected of us. Parents, it is a sacrifice to send your kids to this school. I am so thankful my parents toured this school years ago and decided that the sacrifice was worth it.

You see, Frederica is more than a school to me. It’s FAmily. When I attend events like Graduation and Baccalaureate, and I see Mr. Temple holding back tears when he speaks about his seniors, I see a FAmily. These teachers and administrators work tirelessly day in and day out because we are their FAmily too. Honestly, I can’t wait to walk across that stage and graduate one day.

I’m really going to miss my Fifth Grade FAmily. Mrs. Smith and Ms. Myles, I’m leaving Lower School a confident rising Sixth Grader who is hopefully a little less anxious. Thank you both for everything. You have made Fifth Grade my most favorite year. Leaving Happy Hall and Lower School is emotional, but finally having the opportunity to go to Middle School is thrilling. This is my eighth year of Lower School.

If you are doing quick math, that means I repeated a grade twice. Parents, just remember . . . If you are ever told your child needs to repeat a grade, don't stress out about it too much. It is all going to be ok!

I pray everyone has a safe and restful summer. Thank you and Go Knights!