

2022/23 Graduation Ceremony Transcript

OPENING REMARKS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Speaker: Shea Coughlin

Welcome everyone to the annual Education without Walls Year-end Gala! I am your host, Shea Coughlin.

As a professional actor who was literally born as Titanic was winning the Oscar for Best Picture, the invitation to host today's Gala really sounded like an invitation to host my very own red carpet and awards event. So as you can imagine, I'm having the time of my life... Even though several of my carefully prepared song and dance numbers were cut. This may have been because I led my pitch with a parody of "Friday I'm in Love" called "Friday I'm in Math," and I'll be honest, it wasn't my best work.

Today you'll be hearing from me, as well as Lockey, and other community members, including alumni, staff, parents, and current students because if there's one thing EWoW is, it's a group effort.

It takes the combined work of everyone in this room to make EWoW a success. Sure, certain community members are more visible than others, but Finn the Dog is most certainly not the only one responsible for making EWoW so special.

EWoW has had some major accomplishments this year, one of which was our application for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. This was a herculean effort that required contributions from our entire community. If at any point you:

- Assisted with writing our self-study report
- Expertly schmoozed with the visiting committee at Lucia
- Filled out a community survey or gave suggestions for our new mission statement
- Told Lockey or me, "It's all gonna be ok," because we were panicking
- Helped make the visiting committee feel at home by cleaning, landscaping, and providing flowers or food throughout the day
- Or Attended or taught a class that the visiting committee observed

Please stand for a hearty round of applause. You all absolutely killed the game. It is because of you that EWoW has been recommended for full accreditation by NEASC.

Today is a day of celebration when we acknowledge big events and also the small, seemingly trivial things that really make EWoW greater than the sum of its parts.

- Lisa Temple's life-changing coconut rice bowls may or may not have made Nick cry tears of joy
- Glenn's absolutely meteoric rise to the level of EWoW legend
- Max and Ethan sneaking into EWoW on Tuesday mornings with a truly eclectic assortment of House Hunt artifacts to hide
- Everyone helping Emma Wologdzew recover the various items she regularly loses
- The palpable excitement that permeates the building every time Jennie comes up with a new cross-curricular project with Tammy and Andrea
- Listening to Rock Band on Friday afternoons
- And the most raucous celebration of them all - the reaction to Brooke passing her driver's test on her first try

Today we will be honoring accomplishments big and small. We consider this essential. When we say celebrate the individual and foster the community, we incorporate that conviction into everything we do, including our awards and graduation ceremonies. We hope you enjoy today's ceremonies; we have a lot to celebrate this year.

First on the roster of absolutely essential awards this year is the 2023 EWoW House Cup. Please welcome House Historian Max Ringer, who will be bestowing this year's honor.

HOUSE HUNT

Speaker: Max Ringer

It was truly a tremendous year for the House Hunt. With 29 artifacts found, fought for, and in some cases buried underground, the commitment to winning the House Cup shown by all four houses was a joy to watch. Heirlooms were gained, gambled away, and ultimately tallied to position House Snowpex as your 2023 champions.

Despite dominating all year long, Pandor faced a shocking demise on the final day when Brumbelin and Legendaw pooled their artifacts and donated them to Snowpex to give them 300 total points, narrowly eclipsing Pandor's hard-fought 280 points.

*show the framed treaty

Congratulations Snowpex, and to Pandor, I'm sorry you had to learn the ugly truth that legislation can block action, no matter how hard you try. I hope this motivates you to see the power of alliances in the House Hunt going forward. Regardless of the final scores, I must acknowledge some truly exceptional individual performances.

To **Max Verna**... your scavenging abilities are unmatched. With a record-setting nine artifacts found, you lead all individual scorers and made it much harder for me to hide clues, knowing you were on the prowl. Your engagement with the House Hunt motivated everyone to compete and do their best. You are the paragon of a Pandor, and it is my honor to present you with the **Pandor Scholarship for Community Spirit**.

To **Lucy Jackson**. Despite Brumbelin finishing last in this year's Hunt, you played perhaps the most important role of all when you took over as captain of Brumbelin in a last-minute coup in order to sign the treaty and seal Pandor's fate. It was as spiteful and strategic a move as any Brumbelin has never made it, and I know the future is bright for you and your house. Please join me in congratulating Lucy, the youngest House captain in history, on winning the revered **Brumbelin Debater Scholarship**.

When it comes to Legendaw, there is a long list of iconic instigators. And this year, **Chase Harrington** joined their ranks and cemented himself as one of the greatest seekers and sticklers we've ever seen. Whether you were crawling under a battle tank to beat Pandor to an artifact or in the field sending pictures of clues back to your team of "analysts" to decipher and send back to you so you could more quickly move on, your leadership and innovation have impressed from day 1. Congratulations, Chase, on winning **Legendaw's Instigator Scholarship**.

Lastly, it is one thing to win the House Hunt...It is another to do so without making any enemies. **Bailey Munroe**, your ability to fly under the radar astounds me. To bring your team to victory without showing your cards, damaging alliances, or, ostensibly, putting in any effort at all is a testament to your creativity.

Nick, congratulations on winning the **Snowpex scholarship for creativity**, congratulations on winning the House Hunt at large, and congratulations on doing it all with such style and grace.

MAX RINGER FILM SCHOLARSHIP

Speaker: Max Ringer

Hitchcock, Spielberg, Scorsese, **Parascondola** ... these are now the names that come to mind when I think of cinema. Joseph exhibited a great presence on set for every video we made; whether he was doing sound, slate, or directing, he has an intangible leadership quality that naturally suits him as a future filmmaker. Either that, or he's just really good at yelling at people to do what he says.

There were times when I wasn't sure how much he was retaining or getting out of the class, but after answering almost every question on our final exam, I realized he just has a very good academic poker face. That is, even if he doesn't look like he's paying attention all the time, he really is absorbing and thinking creatively about all the material you throw his way. Genuinely, I was impressed with Joseph's ability to pick up the technical side of things and his spark to bring his vision to fruition.

Joseph, it was a pleasure getting to know you these past couple of months. I'm confident you have a bright future ahead and hope to reconnect one day on a real set. Until then, it is my honor to present you with the **Max Ringer Film Scholarship**.

COMPASS AWARD

Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

As is our way, we like to name our major awards after students who have set a high bar, creating the standard by which all other award winners thereafter are measured. This year, we are renaming two of our awards. First, is the Compass Award. Our award winner from 2021, Christopher Carrara, has set the bar pretty high. From here on out, the Compass Award will be known as the Carrara Compass Award for Excellence in Community Advocacy. Or just the Carrara Award.

This award is given to the fighters at EWOW; the students who challenge me and everyone around them to be our best selves. They are incredibly brave and heroic, throwing themselves into conversations and situations where others figuratively and, sometimes, literally, run away. At EWOW, these fighters are our compass. I could really go on for quite some time about this year's winner. Her personal and community heroism has been, at times, astonishing. Through her honesty and willingness to do the difficult thing, she has repeatedly demonstrated heroism this year. **Emma Wologodzew**, please come and get your Carrara Award for Community Advocacy.

COUGHLIN FAMILY SCHOLARSHIPS

Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

The Peer Support Scholarship is competitive. It requires not only a written statement from the student, but also a recommendation from a peer. This year's winner had a lovely recommendation from Emma Wologodzew. **Joseph Parascondola**, congratulations. You are this year's winner of the **Scholarship for Peer Support**.

The next scholarship, which we have dubbed the Chris Coughlin Craftsman Scholarship, is given to the student who most embodies the ethos of a true craftsman. They are hard-working, thoughtful, reverent, and excellent problem solvers. Our awardee is **John Munroe-Ritter**.

Next, to present the Lyons Heart Award, please welcome alumni and EWoW legend Ben Lyons - Class of 2018.

LYONS HEART AWARD

Speaker: Ben Lyons

I never liked the name “Lyons Heart Award”. Lockey presented it to me during graduation as a surprise. She correctly assumed if she told me beforehand that she was putting my name on an award and then awarding me, I would have been mortified- and come graduation, I was. Years later, I’m still mildly embarrassed.

But that’s not the only reason.

Every person has their own experience, their own struggle. I worried that putting a person’s name on the award would create dissonance between it and what future recipients lived.

Encompassing every student’s challenges under a single commendation seemed inadequate, and I still wonder if it is. I searched for a common factor that could adequately link all of the recipients without focusing on their varied struggles. I found one, and in hindsight, it was obvious.

Education Without Walls.

Specifically its teachers, its students, and their admiration for you.

Not only is this school the place where fighting or surviving our struggles became possible for me and other recipients of this award, it's where we found a community who, whether we like it or not, sees us and our battles.

For that, I’d like to personally thank Lockey, the staff, and my former classmates.

It's your award, accept it however you want- but I encourage you to focus on the certainty that your classmates and teachers thought you deserving of it because whether you believe it or not, they believe in you- that you’ve accomplished something worthy. Something very, very admirable.

This year’s recipients are:

Maximillian Macko

Zoe Temple

Nicholas Santoro

EWOW PARTNER SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Speaker: Shea Coughlin

Evolve Mindfulness Scholarship: **Gwendolyn South Moran**

Village Center for the Arts Scholarship: **Bailey Munroe**

Forest Wolf Wilderness Scholarship: **Nicholas Santoro**

To present the academic awards, the staff member voted “Most Diverse Job Description” Campbell Coughlin.

MEDALS: ACADEMIC & CITIZENSHIP

Speaker: Campbell

Hello everyone, and thank you, Shea, for the introduction! I've attended several Ewow graduations, and in the past I admittedly haven't loved this section. It seemed as if there were far too many awards, and I usually zoned out at around the 15-minute mark. But I've worked with most of these kids in one way or another throughout the year (point out students I've worked with), and now, I am ridiculously giddy to host this section.

You see, there is not a single kid here that I don't want to win an award. Seriously, I am rooting for every child. I looked through the entire Google calendar to make sure I thought of every student, and there were only one or two I couldn't think of an award for because I (somehow) hadn't worked with them enough, and I *still* want them to win an award!

Each child has their own strengths, or "Superpowers," as Lockey calls them, and these shine in different aspects of EWow life. Whether it's their exceptional academic skill, positive attitude, or grit and determination, there's something exceptional in each and every student. This part of the awards ceremony isn't about handing out a bunch of participation awards "because we can"; it's about acknowledging each child's unique strengths, both inside and outside the classroom.

However, that still doesn't fix my original qualm with the length of this section, which we will need to improve; There is nothing worse than seeing the audience zone out while you're receiving an award. Now, if we have 30 awards to fit into 15-minutes (less if you spend several hours a day on Tiktok), that'll be around 30 seconds per award, not including 7 of those 30 awards which have comments from teachers - those will be about a minute each - so really, *pulls out calculator* that's 8 minutes for 23 awards, which would be approximately one award every... 20 seconds.

... oh dear.

Are we ready to do this, everybody?

Well, buckle up, everybody, because here are the academic awards!!!

Foreign Language:

German - **Lizzy Berry**

Japanese - **Matthew Mish**

Japanese - **Gwendolyn South Moran**

Japanese - **Bailey Munroe**

Latin - **Conan Pers**

Spanish - **Brooke Vena**

Spanish - **Broghan Dowler**

Spanish - **Isidora Naples**

Spanish - **Astrid Niles**

English:

Literature - **Brooke Vena**

Literature - **Carter Casbarro**

College Writing - **Astrid Niles**

From Emma Barhydt - Astrid's joy and enthusiasm for her passions always comes across in her work; her effervescent and playful personality also shines through. Though she may often be quieter in class, her comments are always productive and insightful. Her work is always done on time, and she has improved

greatly over the year overall, specifically in her knowledge of grammar and depth of writing. I hope she continues to let her personality shine through as she continues her academic career.

Journalism - Conan Pers

From Emma Barhydt - Conan always shows up to class ready to learn. His homework is submitted even when he won't be in class that day, and he always tries his best. Conan never hesitates to ask questions when he doesn't understand and is just about always on time. He asks meaningful questions and never hesitates to share his opinions. Conan is incredibly bright and is an invaluable member of class. I hope Conan continues to strive towards the things he wants with purpose.

Science:

Engineering - **Chase Harrington**

STEAM - **Matthew Mish**

Science - **Astrid Niles**

Lab Partner Award - **Keira Meyer + Bailey Munroe**

STEM Most Improved - **Rey Brass**

Medicinal Chemistry - **Astrid Niles**

Astronomy - **Zoe Temple**

Art:

Art - **Nicholas Santoro**

Digital Art - **McKaila McAleer**

Scientific Drawing - **Bailey Monroe**

Photography - **Ezekiel Schwartz**

From Trish and Hannah - Zeke has enthusiasm and consistency for taking photos. He supports and is interested in all the lessons, and he has an eye for photography. He was also creative and very engaged in creating images in Photoshop.

Health and Safety:

Sports Lab - **Samuel Casbarro + Matthew Mish**

Math:

Algebra I - **Keira Meyer**

Algebra I - **Bailey Munroe**

Geometry - **Gwen South Moran**

Algebra II - **Brooke Vena**

Algebra II - **Zoe Temple**

Social Sciences:

Judicial Deep Dive - **Isidora Naples**

WDSTF - **Conor Doyle**

Investing - **Conor Doyle**

World History - Keira Meyer

From Emma Barhydt - Keira brings a joyful energy to class. Her work is exemplary, and even when she doesn't quite understand an assignment she asks questions and tries her best no matter what. Though often quiet, Keira never backs down from a challenge and stands up for her beliefs. She isn't afraid to ask questions, question the motivations and morality of historical events, or challenge classmates' ways of thinking. The class is just not the same when she isn't there. I hope Keira continues to foster her confidence and sense of self.

Current Events - **John Munroe-Ritter**

From Jenna Roche - John wears curiosity on his sleeve. He is an open, honest, and engaged learner. And, the funny thing is—no matter where we landed on the globe for the day—John contributed some kernel of intriguing information that he had gathered on his personal learning journey across the internet. Go ahead and see if you can bring up a country with him where he doesn't have something cool to bring to the convo.

Russian Studies: **Brooke Vena**

From Jenna Roche - If you haven't taught Brooke Vena in a class, we highly recommend it. Brooke is prepared, enthusiastic, and brings a flexible brain to class that is open to receiving information, engaging in dialog, and delivering resoundingly on "Aha Moments." Peter and Jenna also had the added bonus of watching Brooke's passion for the study of Russian history, culture, and the arts blossom before our eyes. [NOTE: Please have Brooke open the award in front of everyone. It's funny.]

Lockey Coughlin

Special Academic & Club Awards

Awards for our **Peer-2-Peer Mentors** are up next. These are the students who take time from their busy lives to really listen to their peers and try to give constructive feedback. Their contribution to the mental health of our community cannot be overstated. Our Peer Counselors this year have their medals already, but if you could all stand up so that we can acknowledge your contribution, that would be wonderful. Broghan, Tatum, Lizzy, Emma Wologodzew, Isidora, and Gwen, thank you for your support of your fellow students.

This year's **Mock Trial** never found a time for the final performance that everyone prepared for, but that does not mean that these students' efforts went unnoticed. This is truly a situation where the preparation is the most important, if not the most rewarding part, of the journey. We would like to acknowledge their commitment to learning and, even more so, their commitment to their team. Emma Wologodzew, Broghan, Tatum, Astrid, Lizzy, Isidora, Matthew, and Joseph, excellent work in this club!

ISPs - Program Coordinator, Lauren English

Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "Tell me, and I forget. Teach me, and I remember. Involve me and I learn." We agree. At EWOW, ISP stands for Independent Study Project. These are created by the students, who work on them throughout the year with a mentor of their choosing. This year we had four students participate in our ISP program. Their work was outstanding and transformative for each student, who learned a great deal about their chosen topic, but more importantly, because the motivation comes from the students, they learned about themselves ... about what drives them. We could not be more proud of their work. Our ISP students this year were:

- **Isabella Mains**, who, under the mentorship of Jennie Defazio, researched the techniques and chemistry behind Art Conservation. Isabella also did a second ISP, researching and creating a mural about immigration. Her ISP is documented through photographs and her own words with a slide show in the other room. Please take a moment to look at it!
- **Astrid Niles**, who, under the mentorship of Tamara Vena, learned about the biology and chemistry of repairing degraded soil.
- **Nicolas Santoro**, who, under the mentorship of Andrea Rios, researched foundational art techniques and anatomical drawing.
- **Conan Pers**, who, under the mentorship of Emma Barhydt, researched animal communication.

Each of these students did hands-on, project-oriented work throughout the year and completed their curriculum with a presentation to a small committee of teachers. We could not be more proud of their accomplishments.

US History

Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

US History

- **Timeline Award: IDFK**
- **Binder Award: IDFK**

Our parent advocate or communication award is given to the parent who best exemplifies the word 'advocate' in all communications with EWOW. From Day One, this mom has been fearless and selfless in her efforts to provide her daughter with an excellent education and so much more. Champion, supporter, cheer-leader, motivator, and mamma bear, Barbara Strashun, we would like to acknowledge your tireless, uncompromising efforts advocating for Emma, and for sharing your daughter with us.

COMMUNICATION

Barabra Strashun

BOARD OF DIRECTORS SCHOLARSHIPS 1

Speaker: Shea Coughlin

Chris Carrara Social Science Scholarship: **Bailey Munroe**

Diana Reid Classical Studies Scholarship: **Brooke Vena**

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

Speaker: Lockey

This is the second award to get a rebrand today.

This award is about gratitude and expressing that gratitude to an individual who elevates the community with warmth, positivity, and support. The award sometimes goes to a parent, sometimes a staff member, sometimes a student. The recipient is chosen for the way in which they light up a room as they enter; a person who has a ready smile, and a kind word for all those around them.

Our rebrand is in acknowledgement of one of our most supportive founding families and their brilliant daughters. Our award winner is a young woman who is off the charts when it comes to social intelligence and is absolutely effervescent in her day-to-day interactions at 65 Bridge. I am talking, of course, about Isidora Naples. Izzy, come on up. You are the first recipient of the Naples Shining Light Award.

To present the student citizenship awards, please welcome one of the true heroes of the EWOW staff, Community Liaison Mary Parascondola.

CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

Speaker: Mary

Hello EWOW family,

This past year I've gotten to know each and every one of your kids personally, and I am honored to hand them these awards. The Citizenship Awards really show the true character of each of them, and as their parents, you should be proud. I know I am!

*Our first award is **The Tip Jar Award**. This isn't necessarily for the student with the highest dollar amount but for the student who is the one who takes it upon himself just to do the things that need to get done, even before I see it. This student shows strength of character; he often volunteers to help, has become one of the leaders in the freshman group, and loves to share his knowledge of the world. **Chase Harrington**, this award is for you.

Our next award is **The Greater Good Award**, and it goes to the student who we all believe will quietly save our crazy world one day. This student has spent countless hours working with refugees at the borders. Last summer, she spent hours painting a mural in downtown Bridgeport that reflected her passion for families who are looking for a better life. She is responsible, respectful, compassionate, and cares about the rights of others. She will always hold a special place in my heart. **Isabella Maines**, this award is yours!

Now for **The Man of Mystery Award**. This next student was actually nominated by some of the Juniors and Seniors. This freshman walks among our very tall boys, who can be a little overwhelming at times, and he holds his head high. He's only here a few days a week, but he definitely has everyone wanting to know him a bit more. He's always very respectful and shows tremendous strength of character. And lately, I've even seen his adorable smile. **Inti**, you are EWoW's Man of Mystery.

Now for **The Outdoor Education T.A.** I'm pretty sure most of us know who this goes to. If any of us were ever to get lost in the woods and Tammy wasn't with us, we'd definitely want this student close by. She loves the outdoors and all kinds of wildlife. She's all about protecting the environment and quietly shows her strength of character. She's respectful, compassionate, and she has incredible courage, especially since she is the middle school T.A. **Astrid Niles**; you know this one is for you!

*Now for **The Citizenship Award**. I remember in September, when we had our field day; this person was a bit nervous about taking part. But now, this beautiful, self-confident freshman has quickly become a leader of her class. She walks around the building and talks with everyone. She often will be found in the kitchen planning some kind of social event, and I believe just this week, she had the courage to speak up and take over the role of Brumblin Captain in the House Hunt games. And she does all this as a part-time student. **Lucy Jackson**, you impress me!

Now for **The School Spirit Award**. This award goes to the person who is always concerned and aware of everyone in the building. This student will show up and take part in every event, even when he may not be feeling his best. He's dependable and compassionate, and he respects everyone in the building. There isn't a day that goes by that he doesn't stop and ask me how I'm feeling and how my day is going. **Rey Brass**, you are the Spirit of EWoW!

Our last citizenship award - **The Butterfly Award**, goes to the person in our community who has definitely shown the most growth and has completely come out of their shell. Although they are not here to accept their award, we'd still like them to be acknowledged. This award goes to **Mo Eastwood**.

SHEA COUGHLIN PERFORMING ARTS SCHOLARSHIP

Speaker: Shea Coughlin

Tatum Roche

To present the Parent and Staff Citizenship Awards, please welcome the Student Council President and most dedicated Snowpex House Captain since the great Benjamin Franklin, Lizzy Berry.

OTHER AWARDS (PARENTS)

Speaker: Lizzy Berry

Hi, my name is Lizzy Berry. I am the President of the student council, and I am here to present the parent and teacher awards on behalf of the EWoW student body this year. EWoW wouldn't be the place that it is without our wonderful parents and staff and all that they do for the community. Our staff is incredibly dedicated, taking extra time out of their days to help each student on a personal basis.

First up, we have our Community Involvement Awards, which go to the parents whose community contributions were particularly outstanding.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Ben Moran

Mack McAleer

Lisa McAleer

Lisa Temple

Michael Jackson

Jayne Hinds

Michelle Schute

Our citizenship awards are given out to staff and parents who have contributed in a specific way. This award recognizes people in our community for their individual help to make the little things happen that make EWoW, EWoW.

CITIZENSHIP

Jenna Roche - Magazine

Amy Cheek - Art Show

John Vena - Magical Fix-It Guru

Mike Dowler - Auto Class

Chris Coughlin - Carpentry Class

Mary Parascondola - Community Advocate

From Jenna Roche - We have one special recognition for a community member who has earned the title of EWoW Road Rescue Fairy. He first brought jumper cables and a smile to Jenna when she left her headlights on. And recently, he set a land-speed record swooping in to save Astrid from a flat tire and a sketchy parking lot. Frank Parascondola, come up and collect your commemorative EWoW Road Rescue Fairy wheels and wings.

Frank Parascondola - EWoW Road Rescue Fairy

Next is our POD Award; this award is to acknowledge our most committed parent on duty. The day-to-day life at EWoW would not run as smoothly without the help of this parent.

POD AWARD

Hannah Munroe

Each teacher has their own role at EWoW that they fill perfectly. That is why we have our Outstanding Teachers of the Year Awards.

MENTORSHIP
Peter Gross

OUTSTANDING TEACHERS OF 2023
Glenn Sanchez
Tamara Vena

SHEA

Thank you for that, Lizzy; what a wonderful way to end the first leg of the Gala. I hope you've all enjoyed it! We will now take a brief intermission; feel free to take this time to continue to enjoy our student artwork, enjoy some refreshments provided by Lucia Ristorante, have Trish Halden take family photos, or take part in the interactive portion of the ceremony, where we all run around and gather as many tissues as we possibly can for when Lockey starts crying about the graduating seniors. Have a wonderful intermission, and we will be back at (0:00) for the presentation of the class of 2023!

INTERMISSION

SENIOR ENTRANCE
Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

Presenting the senior class of two thousand twenty-three:

Astrid Nadine Niles

Broghan Harry Dowler

Conan Pers

Emma Frances Gagnon

Emma Nicole Wologodzew

Elizabeth Anne Berry

Isabella Maria Carmella Mains

Isidora Clementine Naples

Everyone, please welcome Broghan, who will present a word from this year's graduating class.

A WORD FROM THE SENIOR CLASS
Speaker: Broghan Dowler

First things first, I have to keep it short, so I'll try not to digress, but if I do, a vein in Shea's forehead might pop. Anyways, hello, I'm Broghan, as one or two of you may know, and today I was forced against my will to speak a bit about this year and the best senior class of the decade. We made a lot of amazing memories this year and even managed to have only six unique names out of 8 seniors, and I'd like to talk about each of them.

Starting off, having two Emmas and a teacher named Emma was a blessing, and it made an incredibly entertaining game of how many times I could fit "Emma" in a sentence.

Lizzy, the day I became numb to the constant mention of people whose names will keep anonymous for their sake, and yours could only be described as blissful - but really, thank you for being tough competition and keeping me on my toes academically.

As for Astrid, I only just talked to her for the first time yesterday, so I don't have much to say - umm...

Ah, Conan! The best source of dark humor - you made the darkness a happy thing, and I appreciate you for it and...

last but certainly not least, the only ones who have effectively gotten away from the grasp of Lockey: the Izzy's. One of you left years ago, and the other left in the middle of this season of EWoW, and yet here you are - you never did fully escape, did you?

Speaking of people who can't escape, Mónica has been here for quite some time, and she's been stuck with me for all of it - But really, Mónica, I've never had a class that I genuinely wanted to succeed in as much as yours, and I cherished every moment of it. Anyways back to me being a pain in the ass, I even forced Jennie to do my Astronomy quizzes over the summer (kidding, of course), but thank you still. And for Tammy, James, Andy, Glenn, Joel, Peter, Jenna, Emma, Lindsey, and Lauren, thank you for dealing with me throughout my senioritis and absurd comments. I really do appreciate it, but don't worry - I'll be back during break. Honorable mention - Spencer - who is no longer with us (he's not dead - he just doesn't work here anymore)

As for the glue of this whole brainwashing operation, we call Education Without Walls, none of this happens without the parents. We might not tell you guys all the time, but you mean the world to us kids.

Speaking of appreciation, we students love Lockey, even if there may be a hint of Stockholm syndrome involved - we love her. So much so that in the last 3 or 4 years of me picturing the moment I stand here to do my speech, my only goal was to see how much I could make her cry. But- as I stand here, I find myself a little worried that it might become more of a competition between the two of us, and I can only hope I will come in second place.

She's done a lot for everyone in this room, and I used to complain about it quite a bit- that she was too selfless. But here we are nine years later, and just as you tried to teach me in the past, I will quit complaining about your selflessness, accept what you have done for me with complete sincerity, and say thank you.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE, muahahaha

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to see these kids, who I think of as younger siblings, grow up and become people that I have no doubt will be incredibly successful, and a large part of that is thanks to you.

P.S. Lockey is so powerful she even got me to dress nicely for graduation - and without Mary, I wouldn't look nearly as nice either

PRESENTATION OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS

Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

More time, more time. There is never enough time with our students. We have worked with some of you for almost a decade; others not even a full year. The more time we get to spend with all of you, the more time we want to spend with all of you. You are, each and every one of you, a gift. All those of us who have had the pleasure of watching you learn and grow into the incredibly powerful individuals that you are today, are immensely grateful that you have come into our lives.

Most of our awards celebrate a full academic year of work. That is something to acknowledge and, certainly, to celebrate. Your diplomas, however, represent 12 years of work. 12 years of time, energy, and focus from you and from your parents, as well as from your teachers, coaches, and mentors along the way; the culmination of a journey that began when you were 5 years old.

This requires a moment of reflection and of gratitude. And so, before we get to the presentation of the diplomas, we are going to take a moment for our seniors to thank their parents. Seniors ...

[Seniors present gifts to parents.]

Ok - now we can get to the presentation of the diplomas!

Astrid Nadine Niles:

Steph, we are so fortunate that you were willing to share your exceptional daughter with us. She is already a force for good in the world, working as an educator and environmental activist, soaking up every bit of information she can get her hands on to help HER help the world.

Astrid began her time here having been recommended by five of our families. Each family, individually, requested that Astrid be recruited to join us. Recommendations happen all the time, but this was undoubtedly note-worthy. There is a strength to this young woman that makes her everyone's choice as a teammate. Her middle school students adore her, as do her peers and instructors. I too, have come to adore you, Astrid. When I asked our students what they thought of the human condition, Astrid's response was quintessentially her, at once warm, forgiving, and genuine. "People are messy." You truly give me hope for the future. Come on up.

Broghan Harry Dowler:

Broghan joined us as our youngest student when he was nine years old. Eight years later, his leadership, sense of humor, and ability to nudge his peers in a positive way has been foundational to the success story of our Education without Walls. At ten years old, Broghan's classroom answers were at once followed up by many more of his own questions, his thoughts barely keeping up with his need to make connections and assess possible solutions. His enthusiasm and curiosity were contagious. They still are. Broghan, it has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life to watch you grow into the young man you are today. Thank you for letting me be part of the process. Come on up.

Conan:

Although I have not known him long, I have found myself rooting for this warm, empathetic young man. Conan was a little shy at first, bravely entering EWoW as a senior. Witnessing the moment at our annual September meet and greet when he realized, truly, that he had found his tribe, was a privilege and one to

treasure. The change in Conan was profound and eminently joyful. He lit up; he embraced the community, and the community embraced him. It has been a positive journey ever since.

Conan's defining character is definitely his emotional intelligence. This is what makes him terrific with animals. He softens visibly with them and has a special bond with Finn. His peers are happy to volunteer to walk the dog when it's sunny, but rain, snow, wind, or cold, Conan is delighted to take Finn out for a walk or playtime. Conan, thank you for joining us this past year. It has been a pleasure. Come on up.

Emma G:

Emma Gagnon also joined as a senior this year, although she had a childhood buddy already in residence, Emma Wologodzew. Emma G. has an easy smile and a mischievous sparkle in her eye. The little time that I have spent with her has helped me to see what an earnest, honest, and hard-working young woman she is. She is also just a lot of fun to have around! We are so glad you decided to join us this year, Emma. Come on up.

Emma W:

Completely undaunted at entering her senior year at a new school, Emma Wologodzew jumped into her classes, made friends, and joined extracurricular activities, committing entirely to our community and making it her own. It's been as if she is trying to cram four years into one. Often the first student on-site and the last one to leave, Emma greets the other students as they arrive and wishes them well as they leave. My only complaint is that we do not get more time with her. Come on up.

Isabella:

Isabella began her time here as an observer, shy and introverted, yet clearly engaged. She would sit in the same room with the other students, no headphones in, head down in a book, listening and occasionally smiling at their jokes and quips with one another. She had one or two close friends and they would chat quietly. Her love of art and fashion shone through with her amazing retro-chic outfits, usually borrowed from her mother's extensive collection.

Over time, she opened up. Today, she radiates quiet confidence, leads by example, and is well-respected by both her peers and her instructors. There is a strength to this young woman that makes her impossible to ignore, but who would want to? She is already a force for good in the world, supportive of her peers and her community, and well-traveled and sophisticated, yet humble and unassuming. Come on up.

Isidora:

Isidora loves to laugh and have fun. She is a talented actress and dancer. Her respect and fascination with others shine through in all her interactions. The summer before her junior year, Izzy began to pile on courses, packing in as much as her schedule would allow. She zipped through pre-calculus and into calculus, jumped into Spanish III and then Spanish IV, and completed her junior year with ten credits, a 3.7 GPA. Izzy is a brilliant, fun-loving, empathetic young woman. She has shown great resilience and strength of character, creating a solid foundation to support her future endeavors. Her warmth, infectious laugh, and commitment to our little community will be missed. I will miss her immensely. Come on up.

Lizzy:

Lizzy came to us mid-way through her sophomore year of high school. She was the driving force behind her change of schools, dragging her reluctant mother and step-father along with her. Completely undaunted at entering mid-year, Lizzy jumped into her classes, made friends, and joined extracurricular activities, committing completely to our community, making it her own. She is a fierce competitor and avid sports fan.

Silly or serious, Lizzy is an organized, enthusiastic, spirited, empathetic, advocate and a natural-born leader. 'Tough' does not begin to describe this formidable young woman and yet, her ability to maintain composure is astonishing. She has a terrific sense of humor, and she is sensitive to the needs of others. She is first to stand up for a peer, first to say thank you, first to admit when she is wrong.

PRESENTATION OF FIRST IN CLASS AWARDS

Speaker: Shea Coughlin

Before we begin giving out the biggest awards of the ceremony, I would like to acknowledge all of tonight's nominees for Best Actress- wait... sorry wrong speech!

All the nominees for first in class and first in school please stand for a round of applause. Each nominee has truly put their heart and soul into their respective characters - dammit... wrong speech again!

This is our favorite game to play with the big awards: see if you can guess the student before they are named...

This Freshman has had a classic coming-of-age character arc this year. Several teachers have attested to the positive transformation they have undergone. Here is a small sampling of the accolades they received from the teachers who nominated her for this award:

"This student has grown socially and has become so much more independent and mature."

"This student came into the building shy and insecure, sitting by themselves with Captain. The turtle. Now they're outgoing and have found their place with the freshman group."

"She has attended class consistently and acts as a leader in the class, not to mention her excellent grades." Do you have it yet? **Bailey Munroe**, you are First in your class; come get your award!

This sophomore found their way back to EWoW after instituting some good-natured chaos in middle school. Since then, they have become a motivated, proactive, and ambitious student. One student who voted for them said, "kid will just keep working nonstop." When they're not working, they can be found recruiting kids to play basketball at Youngs Field. Got it? **Carter Casbarro**, you are First in your class; come get your award!

This Junior is literally always making me laugh. A teacher who voted for them said they "hi create an enjoyable and entertaining environment ... that unifies and includes all present." This is the energy this student brings to EWoW every day; whether they realize it or not, it positively impacts the community. Plus, they can really tear up "Wonderwall" on the guitar. Do you have it? **Joseph Parascondola**, you are First in your class; come get your award!

This senior famously put together a full-length presentation to convince their parents that EWoW was the place for them. Since then, this student's commitment to EWoW has never waned; they have been heavily involved in clubs, events, field trips, and other special activities. Community members noted:

"She's always putting a smile on my face" & "She is the most willing to implement advice and make positive changes"

When she is not absolutely killing it on an academic front, she can be found coordinating her classmates for lock-ins, spirit weeks, and the house hunt. **Elizabeth Berry**, you are First in your class; come get your award!

PARKER AWARD for ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

As many of you are aware, Education without Walls does not give out a Valedictorian award. It seems a little silly, given the size of our student body. However, I do feel that it is important to acknowledge the academic powerhouses in our community.

This year's award winner packed so many classes into her schedule that it gave me fits trying to work them all into our calendar. We made it work, though, and she did not disappoint. She missed, I think, three days all year, and when there was a free moment in her schedule, instead of thinking 'play time,' she thought, yes, let's add another class. It was photography. I have never seen anyone so excited to add another thing to their already packed schedule. She worked as an environmental science teacher's assistant for both the middle school and outdoor education programs, completed an excellent ISP, and achieved excellent grades.

Astrid Niles, congratulations. You are this year's winner of the Parker Award for Academic Excellence.

HOULDIN FIRST IN SCHOOL AWARD for EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP, ACADEMICS, COMMUNITY SERVICE, STRENGTH OF CHARACTER, and PEER SUPPORT.

Speaker: Lockey Coughlin

Our highest honor this year goes to a student who embodies the character of Education without Walls. As Chris Carrara said to me the other day, there is no one that is more OG than Broghan and he has been a leader in the community his entire high school career. He is always here to help, volunteering every summer, he is one of the founders of our Peer Support program, and he is graduating with 27 college credits. He has a way of making everyone feel welcome and included. Broghan, I am so proud of you on many levels. I honestly cannot imagine this place without you. You are, of course, this year's winner of the Houldin Award.