Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

Good morning, everyone. It is an honor to be here with you as we celebrate our Class of 2022 graduates. Today is one of several important milestones in life. Graduates, be proud of yourselves. Celebrate. Hold onto the excitement you feel. You earned this.

Here at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, we strive to lead the community in educational excellence, inspire intellectual curiosity, creativity and achievement so that all students reach their full potential. In just a few moments, over 200 students will walk across the stage to receive their diploma. This celebration is evident of our commitment to their success.

I want to start by saying “thank you” to all of our families and faculty who are here with us today.

As a district, our mission is to create an innovative, inclusive, student-centered environment that supports the development of independent learners.

Each one of you here helped us uphold that mission. As you smile and cheer for your students, remember the role you played that helped get them to where they are now. With your support and encouragement, you have nurtured a group of students ready to take on a life full of learning.

To the Class of 2022, you all are a remarkable group of students.

You have gone through challenges these last couple of years we would have never thought were imaginable. You adapted to several changes and pivoted on short notices. We asked a lot of our students during the pandemic. But you pushed through and came out victorious.

Take a minute to close your eyes. Think back to that first day of elementary school as a preschooel or kindergartener, large book bags in tow and even bigger dreams ahead.

People always ask, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” What did you say? A doctor? A lawyer? Firefighter? A teacher? These dreams are still possible. Walt Disney once said, “All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.”

Now open your eyes. Look at where you are now. Despite all you’ve been through, you had the courage to keep going. Keep striving. Keep dreaming.
You now have the most powerful gift anyone can have - an education. And do you want to know the best part? No one can take that away from you. You are a winner and you deserve everything life has to offer.

As you turn the page to this next chapter in your life, let me offer you a few words of advice.

Number one - **step out of your comfort zone.** I want you to go out there and challenge yourself. Try new things. Meet new people. Even if you make mistakes along the way, get back up and try again. The lessons we learn from our mistakes today help us grow later in life.

Number two - **don’t be afraid to ask for help.** There’s nothing wrong with asking for help when you need it. Whether it’s from your family, future professors, colleagues or coworkers. Everyone starts from somewhere and questions help us get to where we want to be.

Number three - **be kind.** In a world where you can be anything, be kind to one another. Show compassion wherever you go. Bishop Desmond Tutu said, “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

And lastly, **have fun.** Today should not be it. Leave today knowing that the best days are still ahead. The world is your oyster. Keep dreaming big!

Whether you plan to attend a college or university, enter the workforce or join the military, know that we are all proud of your achievements. And you should be too.

Today may mark the end of your K-12 educational journey. But remember - this graduation is not the finish line. This is just the beginning.

Congratulations again, Class of 2022.