

Congratulations Class 2021, I am deeply honored to represent all of you as a recipient of the Walter Johnson's Charles H. Rideout Award. I want to start by thanking all my teachers and administrators for providing me all the tools I needed for success over these last four years. I would also like to thank the staff at Walter Johnson for placing value on striving for academic success and encouraging us to thrive all these four years, different techniques, different activities. I know that keeping up with school and good grades can become rather difficult at times, but I now understand now how hard work pays off in the end. I must say, though, that much of my struggle did not come from studying for exams or not fully understanding content in class, but instead from adjusting to a completely new environment, as I had to complete elementary school abroad and come here to begin sixth grade. I lost some of my English proficiency over time and was consequently placed in ESOL when I came back to the US. Catching up to the standard expected in English became my main priority. I now look back at these moments and realize that I probably worked just as hard then as I did as a high school student. These were my obstacles, but I know you all have experienced your own struggles and worked hard to get this day. This year has been especially difficult for all of us as we moved to virtual learning and finally to a hybrid model. In this most challenging time, we have all worked to achieve this day very very hard and thankfully, I have had many people, and I know you had as well, such as our parents, counselors, coworkers, and teachers, who have consistently been in our side as I know all you have had support to reach our goals. I wanted to share this moment for I am sure that many of us will deal with similar obstacles in the future. While these may seemingly impede us from thinking about achieving our goals, please know that whatever challenges we may encounter, there will always be a way to overcome them, even in the most unexpected ways to achieve the most unexpected results. And now I would like to turn it over to our principal, Ms. Jennifer Baker.