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## Reflections and advice from my Grant experience

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Monday, 01 June 2009

My high school career has been a glorious mix of successes and mistakes, inspirations and struggles, and painful losses that ultimately, in often unforeseen ways, turn into triumphs. As a senior reflecting on four rapid years of growth and experiences in the home of the Grant Generals, I have a few words of wisdom for the underclassmen as well as for the seniors beginning the rest of their lives: be true to yourself and greet the world with open arms.

When you're a freshman, the years you'll spend at Grant High School appear daunting and unending; when you're a senior, you realize those years were fleeting and invaluable. The lessons learned encompass not only academics but social scenes as well. So hang in there underclassmen, senior skip day is just around the corner. The brief time you spend in the halls of Grant High School is about more than learning the South America rap in Spanish 1-2 and reading Romeo and Juliet for the third time in freshman English. These four years are an invitation to try out for a sports team, audition for a choir, sign up for AP chemistry, participate in a theater production, or study Latin. Your high-school career, in other words, is the time to begin to forge your identity, and to become the person you truly envision. The only way to achieve this kind of growth is by taking chances and pushing your limits; by stepping out from your comfortable circle of friends to join a new club, for example; or by going out of your way to meet a person from a different background. The way to feel comfortable being yourself, I have learned, often entails accepting discomfort, and stepping outside your own narrow worldview. The lasting lessons arrive through the little moments, both pleasant and otherwise, that shape the bigger you.

In fact, those little things about Grant are what I might miss the most: the infamous lunch spot outside of Ms.

Navi's room where an ever-growing group has sat year after year, best known for its fleeting appearance in Mr. Holland's Opus; the formaldehyde-encrusted fetal pigs in Mr. Doltar's room; the snowy days this year that should have given us an extra week of winter break; Ezra's

Article I joke; Coach Volpert's flawless dance moves; ghost cat and midnight burritos; Dr. Dreyer's granola bars, endless supply of tea, and leftover juice from excessive NHS council shopping trips to Costco; Mr.

Anderson's life lessons freshman year; AP Calculus take home tests in which Mr. Tucker got his sweet revenge; teary-eyed Fridays at Outdoor School; fuzzy scarves for costumes on Halloween; the von Trapp family; laughter-inducing milk at One Acts, red onesies everywhere; glowing in the dark at homecoming; pre-hurdle jitters at track meets; and locker B2.

I am who I am today because of multitudes of moments made possible by Grant High school. So no matter who you are or what comes next, take out into the world a piece of Ulysses S. Grant, and the infinite memories it holds. May you find success in whatever comes next.