

Orlando Robinson - West Cabarrus High School

Good afternoon,

I am Dr. Orlando Robinson, and I have the distinct privilege of serving this graduating class and our Concord community as principal of West Cabarrus High School. To our Superintendent (Dr. John Kopicki), Board Members, platform guests, families, friends, faculty, and staff—welcome to the West Cabarrus High School Commencement Ceremony.

West Cabarrus High School is a special place built on pride, perseverance, excellence, and community. It is a place where scholars are challenged to grow academically, socially, and personally while learning what it truly means to be a Wolverine.

Today, it is both an honor and a privilege to stand before you on such a joyous occasion. To the West Cabarrus Class of 2026, today we celebrate you. We celebrate your resilience, your accomplishments, your growth, and the journey that has brought you to this moment.

The completion of this chapter is an incredible achievement, but it is not the end of your story. Rather, it is the beginning of a brand-new chapter filled with opportunities, challenges, and possibilities.

Throughout this school year, I have reflected often on the word *MOMENTUM*. Today, I want to leave you with a message centered around that word.

Momentum means in simple terms, the strength of movement an object has when it is moving. The bigger and faster something is, the more momentum it has. It's like something is "building progress" or "moving forward strongly", some examples of MOMENTUM this school year at West Cabarrus are.....

Our Swimming and Track team broke school records, because of MOMENTUM.

We had many teams win playoff games for the first time in school history, like Men's Soccer, Football, Baseball, Softball and Men's Basketball. That was all because of MOMENTUM.

We had many teams make it to the playoffs for the first time in school history, like Volleyball, Women's Basketball and Men's Tennis. That was all because of MOMENTUM.

We had huge accomplishments in our academic test data, IB Program, Aviation Program , with our Beta Club, with our SAVE club, with our Band Program and with more community partners supporting our school than ever before, just to name a few examples. That was all because of MOMENTUM.

See the thing about the class of 2026 you guys have MOMENTUM. Seniors, throughout your lives, you have already demonstrated your ability to possess momentum.

When I think of another example of MOMENTUM in the class of 2026 I think of, Oscar Zuniga Tovar.

Oscar is a kind and low-key scholar, Oscar leaned on the support of his student services team after he and his family experienced devastating hardships this past October. He had every reason to step away from school to help support his family. But instead, Oscar persevered. (He kept his Momentum, he did stop)

Oscar showed up to school each day, completed his work on time, and worked outside of school to help provide for his family. His dedication to both his education and his loved ones speaks volumes about his character. Further demonstrating his commitment to service and responsibility, Oscar has enlisted in the military to serve our country. See Oscar like all of you were born with everything inside of you that you need to be successful in your life, just keep your Momentum, keep moving.

Seniors you moved through challenges that tested your perseverance. You adapted to changes in learning environments, balanced responsibilities, overcame setbacks, and continued moving forward even when the path was uncertain. You moved with momentum from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and today, you move from scholars to alumni of West Cabarrus High School. That is no small accomplishment.

Seniors as you prepare for your next step, whether that is college, the military, the workforce, or another path remember this: you already possess everything you need within yourself to succeed and move forward.

There will be moments in life when you question yourself or wait for someone else to validate your worth, your talent, or your purpose. But do not

underestimate the gifts that already live inside of you. Those gifts will help you keep your MOMENTUM.

Like the characters in *The Wizard of Oz*, sometimes we spend so much time searching for what we think we lack that we forget to recognize what we already possess. You possess everything you need to keep your Momentum. The Scarecrow believed he needed a brain. The Tin Man searched for a heart. The Lion longed for courage. See, you do not need permission from a Wizard to operate in the gifts you already have. The Lion could not have challenged the Wicked Witch if he did not have courage. Just like him, you already have what you need inside of you to move forward. They already had those qualities within themselves all along. And just like them, you already have what you need to catch Momentum.

Class of 2026, life will bring changes, obstacles, and unexpected turns. But every challenge you face will also be an opportunity to grow stronger, wiser, and more confident in who you are becoming.

Sam's speech really resonated with me when he spoke about the dash that will one day will be on all of our tombstones. What Sam did not mention was that dash is not always a straight line, just like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, your life journey will have some curves, maybe some zig zags, heck even some loops. But just like Dorothy kept her Momentum on that yellow brick road, I want you to always keep your Momentum in life. It's okay if you fail but you have to least try and you will live your life knowing you didn't give up, you attempted to reach for your dreams and most importantly you decided to get on that yellow brick road of life and start your journey to become what you were always destined to be.

So today, I leave you with a few final thoughts:

Surround yourselves with people who encourage you, believe in you, and challenge you to become the very best version of yourself.

Never stop moving, learning, growing, or striving for excellence.

Carry the pride of being a West Cabarrus Wolverine wherever life takes you.

Class of 2026, your future is bright, your potential is limitless, and your journey is just beginning.

The Growl of the Wolverine Continues. And remember Don't Stop Your Momentum.

Scholars, this concludes Dr. Robinson's graduation speech. Let's make today a great day, the choice is ours.

Congratulations, and thank you.