

Hawk Air

Presented by Joseph R. Poletti

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Imagine walking into grandma's kitchen right when an apple pie is coming out of the oven. Your natural reaction is probably something like a big, long whiff followed by a great exhale of satisfaction.

Sniff----Ahh

You could almost taste that apple pie. Just the aroma and the air you breathe seem to invigorate, refresh, energize, even nourish the body, mind and soul.

Now, I want you to focus on our air. Because the air that surrounds us tonight is equally as rare.

Sniff----Ahh.

That, my dear students, families and friends, esteemed colleagues, and distinguished guests...that is some good ol' Hawk Air...the air that hangs exclusively over the Newport Nation.

On any given day here, if you look above the tree line and against the clouds you can see a hawk or two gliding on the wings of that hawk air soaring ever higher...always improving their positions...always soaring ever higher.

Sniff----Ahh

Our air is the air of excellence, success, achievement, hard work, determination and ClassScapes.

A couple of times in the last few months when I was struggling with issues—like we all do—I drove out here and walked around the campus just to breathe some fresh Hawk Air.

Sniff----Ahh

It's the air of effort, positive energy, perseverance, commitment, winning and ClassScapes.

It's the air you and your teachers breath every day out here. It's what we breathed last year when our test scores rocketed us from a school in academic trouble to a school that made the highest growth in the county.

For that, give yourselves a big round of applause.

Sniff----Ahh

It's the air of belief, conviction, honor, integrity, character, focus, direction and, of course, ClassScapes.

I firmly believe that if you breathe enough of this air that it will stay with you wherever you go in life. And people will recognize you as being from the Newport Nation because of the superior quality of your work and the superior quality of your character.

It's cool to be smart in Newport....and it's cool to do the right things.

Tonight your wonderful principal, assistant principal and teachers are going to present each of you with a certificate of achievement for strong academic performance. You are definitely breathing Hawk Air.

Your certificate is an honor well-deserved for your hard work. It means you are on the road to success. I want you to promise me you will stay on that road. I want you to think of what tonight's certificate is going to look like next grading period when you get another one...and the next when you get another...and so on.

I want you to think of what that honor is going to look like after you leave NES and you continue to be successful at NMS and WCHS or CHS. I want you to see a high school diploma in that award you receive tonight. And why stop there? Why not see in tonight's award a diploma from Carolina, or State, or ECU, or Appalachian or wherever you want to go to fulfill whatever your dream is.

You already know how to get there.

Sniff----Ahh

You just breathe some of that good ol' Hawk Air.

Now, to wrap this up, I want to end with a beginning. I really should have begun this speech by telling you why I'm not in Newport Nation this year. We had a shining season here last year. You, me, Ms. Lanning, all teachers and staff, the whole Nation worked as one well-oiled, finely tuned learning machine. Without a doubt, it was one of the best years in my 25-year career.

The memories from last year will stay with me forever: Do you remember when Harlem Legend Dexter "LoveBoat" Williams came out and dazzled us with his basketball show and positive message? How about the Prison Dodgeball tournament? Sorry fifth graders, Teachers rule! How about NFL star Levar Fisher? We sure don't want to end up like Mr. Punk in his story. What about playing in the mud from the water being sprayed from the fire truck at our end-of-the-year celebration? Teachers, what about eating together outside during lunch? And Ms. Lanning, what about the new Landscaping and the new Basketball Court? Great year for all!

Students, what about over 7000 ClassScape assessments? And at the end of the year, our test scores were as good as anybody else's. And we even had the Carteret County Assistant Principal of the Year!

And I have you to thank for that.

But while you all were away on summer vacation, I got transferred to East Carteret High School...my new home. So, I never got to say a proper goodbye.

I asked Ms. Lanning if I could come back for the first Academic Achievement Awards, and she graciously obliged.

But I'm not going to say goodbye tonight, either. Because I have worked at NES in some capacity already on three different occasions. And here I am again tonight. You can see—and you better believe—that Newport has a place in my heart...and I keep bouncing back here.

What you have to know is that I have undying belief in you and love for you...and always will. And what I have to know is that you love me, too. I know you do because of the tons of hugs I got from you every day last year...and even this year when the whole fourth grade came on buses to East Carteret for the North Carolina Symphony.

So, if these two conditions hold true—I love you and you love me—then we don't have to say goodbye. Because the story of love is hello and goodbye....only until, we meet again...

Thank you for allowing me the honor of working with you last year. Thank you for the honor of allowing me to speak to you tonight.

And congratulations, Newport Nation, on your outstanding academic achievement. Keep breathing that good ol' Hawk Air.

Sniff--Ahh