

Salutatorian Speech – Carlos Herbozo

Hello Class of 2021, and West Orange family and friends! I am honored and humbled to be your Salutatorian. This school year has been like something out of a science fiction story, but, despite everything, here we are today! Now, I'd like to take a minute of your time to talk about what I think is the most important part of the West Orange school system, and the reason we were able to make it through this unprecedented school year: the people.

The support from our community members is truly out of this world. Whether it was the Adopt a Senior Facebook group, fundraising for our celebrated sports teams and extracurricular activities, or supportive lawn signs, we could always count on the West Orange community! West Orange prides itself on its diversity, and we are truly a reflection of the world at its very best at a time when it is needed now more than ever.

Furthermore, being isolated at home away from loved ones, many people's mental health was affected. Thankfully, many students spoke up for student mental health and created initiatives to share various coping strategies. Additionally, in light of the strained political climate, student activism was at an all-time high, with so many of us speaking up, and speaking out, for marginalized communities. True to West Orange form, our students have once again made a difference.

Finally, I'd like to thank our teachers. This year, our teachers put in long hours to adapt their lesson plans and teaching methods to Zoom. It was an arduous task, and we applaud them for continuing to educate us despite the challenges of virtual school. I can honestly say that I think we are all better because of it.

So as we venture out now into the real world, it may seem vast, dark, and scary, almost like outer space. But because of the amazing people of West Orange, I know that we all have a great launch pad to blast off from! Thank you, and congratulations class of 2021!