

To the Class of 2020 —This is not the graduation ceremony we expected, but the unexpected and uncertainty seem to find you.

You and your classmates were born during the uncertainty of 9/11 and your class is graduating amidst the uncertainty of a pandemic.

Your script has not followed the expected storyline. You had no group hugs after finals, no senior prom, no group photos with friends in caps and gowns.

I think about that second Thursday in March. When you left Newton South and Newton North the day before Friday the 13th, none of us knew that would be the last time you walked out of a classroom as a student in Newton. Indeed, that moment was unexpected and uncertain.

But your Class of 2020 is defined by much more than your final day on campus and these final days as a 12th grader.

Uncertainty finds you, but it does not define you.

I've seen you rise up amidst chaotic times to find ways:

To come together for each other,

To force the adults around you, including me, to be better,

To write a new story.

I've seen you use your voices to call for equality, for social justice, for schools safe from gun violence.

I've witnessed you use the changing world of social media to marshal good works.

I've heard your call for action to clean our environment, so your children and your grandchildren don't also face the uncertainty of climate change.

As we celebrate your accomplishments and the imprints you have left in our city, on your friends and upon your teachers, and as you take this leap into an uncertain world, I know with certainty that your Newton community will always be here for you.

I know with certainty that you will not be defined by this moment in time.

I know with certainty that you, the Class of 2020, will lead the way into a new, better, more certain future.

I'll be following your lead. We all will.