

A Time to Reminisce

Oona S. - Class of 2020

One of the only things I remember about Kindergarten at Appleton Village School was my first day. Like many of my new classmates, I was scared and nervous. Going to an unfamiliar place and being left there with a class full of strangers was terrifying. However, as I, the eighth grade's Class President, welcome you to Appleton's very first virtual Promotion Night Ceremony, I can't help but wonder when this school became my second home. Over the past nine years, our class has gone from being complete strangers to becoming a family, a family who support and drive each other crazy in equal amounts.

We are here tonight, from the comfort of our homes, to celebrate the time we spent at Appleton and look towards the future as we move on to high school. We have a chance to say goodbye to this place we have made so many memories and the teachers we are leaving behind, an opportunity to reminisce about all the meaningful times we have spent together. These experiences have not just shaped us academically, they have shaped who we are as individuals. My classmates and I would like now to share just a few of the best memories we have made at Appleton.

In Kindergarten, our class was crazy. Nine years later, I think we can safely say we still are. This was the year, with our teacher Mrs. Gerry, that for so many of us, marked a whole new set of firsts. I clearly remember when we had our first fire drill. Half of the class started screaming and then fell out of their seats. It was complete chaos! Fifteen minutes later, my legs were still shaking!

Big Buddies were, and still are, a big part of Kindergarten. Sitting in a chair next to my big buddy as we read books together and played games they seemed so big, and a little bit scary. Now as a big buddy myself I realize my big buddy was probably just as terrified as I was. The sixth graders back then seemed so big and grown up, now as an eighth grader they seem so young.

Our kindergarten lives mostly consisted of learning the ABC's and how to count, going to P.E. with Mr. Payson, and learning to do the Square dance and Macarena with Ms. Vendetti.

Of course, everyone's favorite part of the day was "choice time," when we could take out our toys and play with them at the end of the day if we had been good. (Just like now, we were very persuasive and received "choice time" every day.) One of our favorite toys were, My Little Ponies. They were "the thing" in Kindergarten and the girls used to fight over who got "Princess

Sparkles” and “Pinkie Pie.” during choice time. I remember one day in particular when there was an ice storm and everyone had to stay an hour longer than normal, extending our choice time, it was the best thing ever!

Moving up from Kindergarten into first grade felt so grown up. Ms. Blackler was our teacher and most of the class was equally awed and terrified by her. First grade was a bit more memorable, in some ways, than Kindergarten, as we began to be able to put our knowledge of the ABC’s to use and learn how to read more on a more difficult level. One part of that was the marked reading tubs we used to find the right books for us. This turned into a competition, as so many things do with our class, and we would find ourselves comparing what tub we were currently reading, as if this was the measure of “coolness”. I also remember the number and word flashcards that we used as we memorized sight words and learned how to add and subtract.

As always, Ms. Blackler taught her Amazon Rainforest unit, and the ceiling was covered with fishing nets that were the “canopy” for most of the year, with paper monkeys and birds hanging throughout.

First grade also brought about a “ghost fetish”, where most of the girls in our class became obsessed with “The Underworld”. It would make a lot more sense if this had been because of the Greek God project, but that was in second grade, so I think we were just weird. Several times at recess, our class could be seen running around the playground proclaiming, “Someone has died here!”, “Look there’s a bloody woodchip!”, or “There’s a handprint on that tree, it’s the entrance to the Underworld!”

In second grade, Mr. Todd, beyond being our homeroom teacher, was also our math teacher and Ms. Blackler continued to teach us ELA. At the time, I thought this was so grown up, almost like being in middle school and having more than one teacher.

The most memorable things about second grade math were the movement breaks we used to do. Our whole class would stand up and flail our limbs, sometimes running around the room. Mr. Todd kept sparkling water cans stacked up against the window, and somehow someone in our class always seemed to knock them over.

In Mr. Todd’s class, we also learned about Monarch Butterflies. Unfortunately, that year there were almost no Monarchs, so we only ended up getting two chrysalises, after Danika waded through her entire field to find them.

ELA was a bit different, as Ms. Blackler still had most of us in awe. During her class, we wrote about penguins and Greek gods. It was the first year we had access to laptops and during one class someone came across nude Greek god statues on the internet, which our class thought was absolutely hilarious. Other times, we would spend an entire class talking about Ms. Blackler's sons and their fishing stories. Our class was equally thrilled to have distracted Ms. Blackler and to hear her stories.

Second grade was also the first year that we met Ms. Scott and her "Dudley the detective" stories and puzzles. She would always bring a whole new level of energy and enthusiasm into our classroom that enthralled us.

Like any other grade, 3rd grade has projects that everyone looks forward to. Our class was no exception. A couple of weeks into the school year, we began researching different countries for our "Country Reports". Not long after that, during one of our lunchtimes, a giant tank of salmon eggs was relocated into our classroom.

Third grade was also the beginning of the three years at Appleton that focus on the History of Maine and the Colonists. As we wrote country reports and studied the life cycle of the salmon, Ms. Morin had us sewing bonnets and old fashioned hats and making butter by shaking heavy whipping cream in a jar until it condensed. During one of these butter making sessions, the cap of somebody's jar was not on as tight as it should have been and several of us found ourselves covered in condensed cream.

Third grade was normally the year our class would have started Spanish. Unfortunately, the school was unable to hire a Spanish teacher (maybe they heard we were coming?), so we went without, except for occasional lessons from Ms. Morin. Most of our class enjoyed learning Spanish and I still remember most of the things she taught us.

Ms. Morin also brought in someone to teach the 3rd through 5th graders how to Contra-dance. I remember how awful everyone in our class thought it was. Whenever a boy would have to dance with a girl, they would hold their hands an inch apart so they didn't have to actually touch. Nobody was chancing getting any Cooties!

By fourth grade, the girl's fear of getting cooties had not dispersed, but at least we weren't forced to dance together. In Ms. Ludwick's class, we began the classic Maine Games unit and began researching the topics we had picked for our papers. We also began

constructing our games in and out of class, which was a little hazardous, especially with a class full of 4th graders and several hot glue guns.

We were introduced to the STORIES project put on by the Farnsworth Art Museum too. This included releasing us onto a nearby farm to wreak havoc and take pictures.

“Ludwick Loot” was one of the defining memories from 4th grade. From the time we first constructed the duct tape wallets to put it in, until we were able to spend our money. “Ludwick Loot” became a competition to see who could earn the most. By the end of 4th grade, the hoarding of “Ludwick Loot” had become so obsessive that everyone had more money than they could possibly spend.

4th grade was also a time for firsts. We met our first Spanish teacher, Senora Egland, and went skiing at the Snow Bowl for the first time. I remember going up the double chairlift with Danika, who, at that point, had never been skiing before. At the top of the hill, there was a giant mound of snow to ski over, but it can be really difficult for beginners. I recall telling Danika what she needed to do when we got there. Yet, when we got to the top, I turned around to see Danika had not gotten off the chairlift. Instead, she was hanging off the chairlift several feet in the air looking both alarmed and amused. I remember laughing myself hoarse because they had to stop the chair lift and she had to be carried off.

From kindergarten to 5th grade, the number of kids in our class had changed many times, as we gained and lost students. However, for some reason, most of the kids that left seemed to be boys. Since kindergarten, we had lost Curtis, Arthur, Liam, Emmet, and Hunter. So, by the beginning of 5th grade, we only had three boys left in our class: Colby, Ethan, and Franklin. The girls outnumbered the boys 11 to 3. The three boys, in desperation, even set up a boy’s support group.

I remember for a couple of days in a row, both Franklin and Ethan were sick and Colby was the only boy. After two days, he just sat down outside the classroom, refusing to work in the classroom, because he said, “there are too many girls.”

Another defining memory in 5th grade was how Mrs. King, our fifth grade teacher, would put our homework on the cubby door and if you didn’t bring it back on time she’d put your name on the cubby, too. (Some people’s names seemed to be perpetually on it.)

In 5th grade, we studied the Revolutionary War and played Mrs. King’s “Colonizer” game. To play the game, we were put into groups, our fate determined by the drawing of cards.

At one point, my group only had three people left alive, after losing a ship and a fishing boat. Mrs. King said no one had ever lost so spectacularly.

This was also the year that we went to Tanglewood and constructed cars for the Linx car race. My favorite story from Tanglewood was when we arrived. Everyone was offered bug nets to wear, but nobody took them because we felt we were “too cool”. For the rest of the day, we were eaten ALIVE by the bugs! Blood was literally dripping down our legs. The second time we were offered bug nets? There was no question. Every single person took one and we crashed through the woods looking like jungle explorers.

By 6th grade, “Movement breaks” were the only thing that kept our energetic class from completely going insane. We were the class that seemed to drive everyone insane.

It was our first year of middle school and one of the first things that I recall is sitting in Ms. Billings’s ELA class and hearing her say, “Don’t make me drop kick you to the throat”, something we would hear multiple times in the coming years. An affectionate warning that let us know when we were toeing the line. Ms. B introduced us to middle school with a description of how creative she could be with a sharpie if you fell asleep in class and why you don’t really want to hear a “Mama Billings” talk.

We were Mr. Munson's first 6th grade class at Appleton and we were a little difficult, to say the least. Between interrupting in the middle of class and completely derailing the conversation, our class was a handful. Sometimes multiple people would stand outside the room, waiting for him to talk to them.

One time, he told Hazel to go sit outside. A few minutes later everyone promptly forgot about her, until she started knocking on the door 30 minutes later. I would say we were so focused on the lesson that we forgot, but that would be lying.

Dissections were one of the only times we seemed to calm down a little bit. Although, in retrospect, handing out metal utensils with sharp pointy ends to a class of immature and wild 6th graders could have been a hazardous idea.

Mr. Todd moved up from 2nd grade to teaching middle school math and became our homeroom teacher for the second time in our nine years. Homeroom with Mr. Todd was just as wild as a class with Mr. Munson. At one point, Colby and Ethan found a tennis ball and were chucking it around the room trying to keep it away from Autumn, narrowly avoiding clocking people in the head.

By 6th grade, we were onto our fourth Spanish teacher, Senora Karod, who was the one spanish teacher who has stayed for more than a year. A brave teacher to teach our class spanish, but she has done well.

6th grade was also the first year that some of us were lucky enough to have Ms. Scott as a teacher. Ms. Scott's classes consisted of everything from doing math calculations, to an interpretive dance about negative integers. She is always happy to talk about anything and more than once we have found ourselves deep in a debate about whether or not sushi was "good" or how we should turn her room into a zero gravity room.

When I think back to last year and 7th grade, I remember all the topics we studied and learned about, but also the times when we goofed off and just had fun. We finally studied the Holocaust with Ms. B, which our class had been begging to do since sixth grade, and started the STORIES Farnsworth project for the second time. Instead of photos, our class explored embroidery and boat building (despite Colby and Ethan insisting we couldn't be trusted with needles). We were arranged into groups based on an ancient culture we wanted to study, the Egyptians, Norse, or Chinese to name a few. Together we researched, created posters, and developed symbols to represent in embroidery, plus made boats out of old buoys. We also made several trips to the Apprentice Shop in Rockland to bend wood, an endeavor that went surprisingly well for our class.

What I remember most about 7th grade though is the time Ms. B had to tell the boys to stop playing with their hair or when Earl fell asleep on the Music room carpet during class.

In Mr. Munson's class, a wasp dive bombed everyone as several of us ducked and others started screaming. One day one of our classmates (not mentioning any names) farted during class and Mr. Munson was forced to open a window to air out the toxic fumes that were choking several of us. Or, how while talking about how clownfish could switch genders, class had to be paused, so that we could stop cracking up. A separate time, while we were dissecting clams, the fire drill went off and Josie threw her clam guts all over the ceiling. When we came back to the classroom it was clear she wasn't the only one.

In Spanish, Colby slide tackled the floor while running across the room just so he could get to a different corner during a game. Another time, during lunch, I spit chocolate milk on Hazel's face because she made me laugh so hard. I don't remember why

Our 8th grade year started off with a three day overnight trip to Camp Kieve, with the upcoming freshman from all the Five Towns. At first, I think pretty much everyone in our class was scared about having to interact with different people other than the ones in our class. Yet, by the end, I know I felt a little bit better about going off to high school.

One time, we spent an entire Science class talking about World War III. There was no apparent reason, other than the fact that it was on Tic Tok. Another time, Mr. Porter walked in on us voting whether or not Mr. Munson should keep his full beard or go back to a goatee.

Yes, our class was still crazy, but we had come a long way since the “movement breaks” in 6th grade. We were even able to watch documentaries in Mr. Munson’s without him having to constantly pause because we were bouncing off the walls, sometimes literally. In Social Studies, our least favorite class compared to Science, we did a unit about World War I and World War II and watched five consecutive documentaries about the war. Mr. Munson almost fell out of his chair, when, after the first one, Hazel asked if we could watch the rest.

Ms. B continued to work on our reading and writing skills and started the NaNoWriMo novel writing project with us at the beginning of the year. Some of us took it a little more seriously than others, perhaps too seriously, determined to complete a 150 page novel by the end of the year.

In January, with the help of Mr. Munson and Mr. Bernardo, our guidance counselor, we began to think about heading off to high school in the Fall. Mr. Bernardo talked to us about grading, classes, and everything in between.

By February, we had signed up for all our high school classes and taken what would be our last NWEA’s at Appleton. We were well and truly on our way.

Although nine years had passed since we walked through the doors of Appleton Village School for the first time, we found ourselves gearing up to move on. We were looking forward to finishing up the school year, going on our class trip aboard the Mary Day, and enjoying our last summer as eighth graders. Unfortunately, that’s when we started hearing about the Coronavirus, and over the course of one weekend, the school was shut down.

Our eighth grade year has been characterized by gym classes, where we have gotten into trouble with Mr. Mitchell for throwing shoes, spontaneous Tik Tok dancing, and watching Morgan Freeman movies. Flu pandemics, new viruses, and online classes where nobody can hear anything. Despite the strange ending, it’s been a good year. It hasn’t ended the way we expected but, we have made memories that will last a lifetime.

As you will see as we move on, every eighth grader was asked to share one of their favorite memories from our time here at AVS. Despite the fact that we cannot physically be here tonight, our class still wanted to present something, to commemorate our time here, and say goodbye. These upcoming videos represent some of our best experiences and memories at Appleton. From the time we were five years old, scared and nervous about our first day of school, to nine years later as eighth graders, who are just as scared, nervous and excited for our first day of highschool as we were in Kindergarten. These memories are a small part of what we will be taking with us.

Thank you, teachers, staff, and parents! You have shaped who we are as a class and as individuals. Because of you, we can move on to the next stage of our lives knowing we are ready.