

Good Evening!

Good Evening. I would like to extend a warm welcome to parents, family members, our dedicated Pomperaug staff, Mrs. Regina Botsford, Superintendent of Schools, Pat Perry, Chairperson for the Board of Education, and members of the Board.

But most importantly, to the students in Pomperaug High School's graduating class of 2014. This is your night, and we couldn't be prouder. Congratulations!

I realize, as I look around the room, in one way or another, all of us here played a role in getting our seniors to this milestone...a new chapter in a lifelong memoir...a sentimental finale to their high school career.

Students...I imagine anyone who has ever pondered the words to impart to more than 300 graduates has gone through the same creative but agonizing process of reflection, writing, and revision. But what occurred to me, was the very inspiration I was waiting for...would prove to be the most fitting theme this evening. Whatever definition you have – call it an inner voice, a special kind of persistence, a strong desire to accomplish a goal...our determination to get to a positive outcome often pushes us, guides us, plants us firmly and finally in the right direction. *A little something called motivation.*

We may not always find it in everything we do, or at the moment we expect to get it, but it is that invisible force that ushers us closer to where we want to be, it helps us discover our special niche, to find the right college, land in the career that suits us best– and to settle into the life we dreamed of all along.

Daniel Pink, bestselling author of *Drive*, said it best, *“Human beings have an inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives.”*

Students, your drive and determination was tangibly evident on the tail of countless touchdowns, field goals, homeruns, three-point shots, swim meets, Heritage puts, concerts, the Art Show, and everything in between.

Your motivation to do well was visible in the way you approached a word problem in math, the choice you made in selecting a theme for an essay or perfecting your dialect in Spanish. It lived in the brush strokes you made across the canvas to convey an emotion or when you hit the perfect note that ultimately supported the creation of a beautiful symphony. It was in all your actions, those deliberate choices you were inspired to make...when extraordinary things occurred.

Your motivation to help others was present in the hundreds of community service hours you logged, the charitable activities you engaged in, and in the clubs and organizations in which you were actively and selflessly involved. And there are so many more stories like these...from National Honor Society, peer mentoring, TLC on PLC, Link Crew, Dodgeball for diabetes tournaments, the Evan Gagnon

Scholarship, Interact and student government projects...and many more.

Those were the tireless efforts, both overt and subtle, that demonstrated your strong connection to the PHS school community and to one another. Most importantly, you were inspired to succeed academically, seemingly unaffected by the hundreds of hours of sleep you might have missed along the way.....(well, perhaps a yawn or two in first period), despite the momentary interruptions State testing, NEASC, fire alarms and New England weather brought your way. You remained steadfast on your journey, accepted into universities like Columbia, Tufts, Boston, URI, UCONN, Fairfield, Syracuse, Northeastern, NYU, Providence and Quinnipiac...and it is that incredible drive, that persistence...that we pay tribute to this evening.

But it is far more meaningful when you hear about the paths that others before you have chosen, whose passion and self-determination helped them realize their own dreams.

As part of a graduation tradition, we have invited a special person or dignitary to speak to our graduates. We have had former President Clinton, Chris Murphy, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Jenny Dell, sports anchor for the Boston Red Sox. This year, we invited another Pomperaug High School alum to say a few words. You may know her from Channel 8 and the local news team. Ladies and gentleman, Mrs. Theresa LaBarba Dufour. **(PLAY VIDEO)**

John Muir, a naturalist, once remarked, Some people are on the world, not in it. So students, I hope you never forget to....Be in the world...be present in every moment... **Find your voice, your inner DRIVE.** And in this digital age of images and information, we hope you are always motivated to **read** – for it is still through the art of language that allows us to think and to imagine the possibilities that exist for us in the years ahead. Right now, your friends are distributing a gift card for each of you to **Barnes and Noble Book Stores** – a symbol of literacy and lifelong learning -- from all of us here at Pomperaug High School to all of you.

Jonathan Lockwood Huie, former technologist and Silicon Valley executive, said, “Celebrate endings, for they precede new beginnings.” On behalf of the staff and administration at Pomperaug High School, we wish you the best of luck in the future... and on a more personal note...I am grateful to each of you for making my time here as your Principal both positive and rewarding.

Thank you.
