

PHS Graduation Speech

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Graduates, honored guests, families, and friends.

We are here this evening to celebrate your accomplishments, Class of 2014. You are my first graduating class, and I couldn't be more proud of you! You have learned about history, geography, world languages, math, and science. You have learned to research responsibly, to make clear and cogent logical arguments, and to design solutions to real world challenges. I hope you would say that you've learned to think, to question, and to communicate.

And you have learned more than academics. You have shared friendships with each other and you have shared your challenges and your triumphs with each other and with your teachers. You have learned how to play with and against each other, how to win, and how to lose.

And I hope, for all that, you have learned yet much more.

I hope you have learned to listen with the intent to understand, to wonder joyfully about the anomalies that you find in life, I hope you have learned to reflect to write and to keep a journal. I hope you have learned to support each other, to ask for help when you need it, and to persevere even when you cannot see what lay ahead. I hope you have found a connection to something bigger than yourself – to ideals, to values, to service to others, I hope that, over time, you will look back on the years you spent at PHS and cherish them and understand them with the evolving perspective that only increasing maturity and self-awareness can bring.

I hope you have learned to forgive. Forgive yourself, and forgive others, for imperfection is the human condition, and it is in forgiving that we can create new possibilities and connections.

The faculty and staff of Region 15 have been privileged to be your teachers, many of you, for the past thirteen years. And you will have many more teachers in your life – college professors, to be sure, but also the wide variety of people and situations you have yet to encounter.

Never forget, though, that your families were your first teachers. They taught you to say your name, they taught you to trust, and they taught you to try. As you prepare now to move on to your future, whether in the world of work, or college, or in service to others, know that your families were your first teachers - and they are also your forever teachers.

As you craft your future in places that might be near, or might be far away, stay grounded in your values. Though you may not always agree with your parents' advice, I promise you that it will be amazing to see how much smarter your parents will get as you get older. Heed their advice in the spirit of love and support with which it is offered. Share your thinking and your feelings with them, and listen to theirs. Over the many years ahead of you, your perspectives, your motivations, and your opinions will grow and change – as well they should. Through all the change ahead of you, let your families and your values be your constant – now, next year, and throughout your life.

As you go forth and as we bid you a fond farewell, may you continue to grow in joy, in responsibility, and in courage, confidence, and caring.