

OBHS Class of 2018

Principal Ms. Sharon Lasher



Good afternoon and welcome.

Welcome parents and grandparents; family and friends.

A warm welcome to the Board of Education members, Dr. Seinfeld, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Mulhall and Mr. Cipriani, Assistant Superintendents. Welcome to my colleagues Dr. Vacchio principal of the Vernon School and Mrs. McElwee principal of the Roosevelt School; my assistant principals Mr. Elsesser and Ms. Gonzalez as well as other fellow administrators, teachers and staff of the HS. I would be remiss if I did not publically thank Mr. Chris Elsesser for all he has done to make this graduation day so spectacular. I think we started talking about it on his first day at OBHS, this past October. Thank you Mr. Elsesser. Special thanks to Scott Lyle and our entire custodial staff for all they have done to prepare our grounds for this beautiful ceremony. And most important, thank you Mother Nature!

MOST of all welcome to the Class of 2018.

From a town known as Oyster Bay Long Island...

I started with these same words at last year's graduation explaining that prior to August 2, 2016, to me, they were lyrics from a popular song. Now, I know they mean much more. That feeling grows for me each and every day I spend here in Oyster Bay. Some of you have been

here for six years while others joined the class of 2018 later on.

Regardless, I have quickly learned how much you appreciate where you live and where you learn. Oyster Bay High School is truly a hidden gem among Long Island schools. And to prove that point, graduates, please stand if any or your parents or grandparents attended this school.

Audience members, please stand if you are a former graduate of Oyster Bay High School. Wow, look at the number of people standing; that speaks volumes. You may be seated. Returning to the community where you were raised and educated to raise your own children really says it all. Pride in the community; faith in the education system. What a wonderful legacy you have created for your families. Each of you will forever represent Oyster Bay High School and this fine community.

What should you be thinking as you are ready to graduate from high school? I think it's safe to say there are numerous thoughts running through each of you. After all, most of you have been here for six years and now you are starting something new. What have you learned? What lessons will you take with you? I hope that many of you have learned to speak up. Advocate for yourself; use your voice.

This has been an interesting year for those of us working in schools. School safety has been on the forefront and continues to be our number one concern. We have made many changes to the safety and security procedures at Oyster Bay HS and more will be implemented next year. Prior to implementing each and every change, we spoke

with students to see how they felt about our proposed changes. Our students' voices matter to us. This year, we instituted a digital citizenship week, to bring awareness to the potential dangers of misusing the internet. We had students sit on the committee to help plan our activities so that they were meaningful and relevant to their lives. Again, student voice matters to us. We have students sit on our Site Based Committee, a building level shared decision making committee whose purpose is to identify issues and develop ways to improve them together. Our students participated actively, and again, we listened. At the end of this year, Lindsey Tiberia reached out to me to ask if the seniors could walk the halls of TR Elementary school in their caps and gowns to show the younger students what lies ahead for them. We had several conversations and came up with a plan. This past Wednesday, we did just that. One student's voice led to almost 30 of her classmates coming together for a wonderful event. Students, use these situations as lessons and encouragement to use your voice. Appropriately, of course. You will quickly learn that you must advocate for yourself as your parents and guardians are no longer able to do so. In college, your parent or guardian will not be permitted to speak to teachers, administrators, and clerical staff about things that may need attention. I know because I tried. If you enter the workplace, your employer hires you, not your parent or guardian. They can't call you in late to work or ask questions about your paycheck. Your mail will no

longer be addressed to the parent or guardian of. It will be addressed to you; it is yours to receive, yours to open and yours to handle.

During your high school years, certain things were provided for you. That will change. Continue to know what you are learning, and more importantly, why you are learning it. If you are not sure, ask. Use your voice. We have learned this year across our country that student voice matters. Students speak and people listen. My generation needs your generation to make our changing world a better place, a safer place, a kinder place. Set your expectations high and your dreams higher. From the words of Dr. Seuss, “Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.”

To the families of our students, I would like to thank you for being our partners over the last six years. I believe our combined efforts have produced the intelligent, passionate, insightful, caring and compassionate young men and women sitting here today. Together, we have made them college and career ready. They are ready to open their own mail, make their own good decisions, and speak with their own voices.

To the Class of 2018: The accomplishments of the class of 2018 are outstanding. And, this is just the beginning! You have demonstrated the importance of teamwork, setting goals, hard work and never giving up. And most importantly – kindness toward others! the opportunities you will have to be a part of our world’s changes are

endless; grab them and go to the places we know you can. I am truly blessed to have been your principal these last two years. I am happy I've had the time to get to know you although I wish it were longer. Stay in touch, keep us apprised of your journey and be active alumni of OBHS. You have made me and the staff of Oyster Bay High School feel respected and valued. You have shown us understanding, warmth, compassion and kindness. I thank you for that.

You must never stop learning, never stop growing, and never stop dreaming. And always remember, make good decisions and live a safe, kind life. I look forward to hearing how you have used your voice in all of your future endeavors! Thank you and congratulations!