

Valedictorian Address 2019

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Welcome to our final day as high school students. This has been a milestone that we've been striving for our whole lives. As we approach these final moments of senior year, it's amazing to be free at last, but as we embrace this new-found freedom, it's important to cherish the memories and the community that got us to this moment.

The Class of 2019 is really remarkable. Like seeds in the wind, our passions scatter across vast fields and plant roots. Among us are collegiate-bound athletes, eclectic musicians, creative artists, science researchers, innovative gamers, a figure skater, and LAX Bros. We're also composed of students that have just moved to the U.S. and worked hard to learn English and get their diplomas. In addition to these notable qualities, we also have other achievements unique to our class. We are the grade that nicknamed one of our substitute teachers Mindy, from Drake and Josh, placed last in lip sync for 3 years consecutively, and we are the only class to have Dr. Rufa as an assistant principal at OBHS. All 116 of us are what make up the incredible Class of 2019.

Now our community is more than my classmates and myself. It includes the teachers that taught us each day, our school counselors that held our hands through the college process, our parents and family who supported us throughout high school, the administrators that helped us achieve our plans, the custodians who made the school beautiful and safe every day as we walked through those doors, and the Board of Education who put students' needs first. Together, we made our own memories at Oyster Bay High School that allowed us to grow as individuals. We will always carry these moments with us as we approach the next leg of our journey.

Most recently, a bunch of us went back to help out in Vernon Games and Field Day at Roosevelt. In seeing these kids running around and pushing the poison ball away, it was strange to realize that this was us. We were the kids that believed Vernon Games was the most important day of our lives. We were the kids that sat in the 6th grade bleachers, so proud that we were the big kids of Vernon. We were the kids who sprinted to line up when we heard the Ralph's Truck was coming. We were the kids that fought for the bean bag chairs in Ms. Davidson's library, a skill that was helpful for both musical chairs and grabbing a seat on the first day of school. In looking back, I think we all could have relaxed a bit, but these memories were what made growing up in Oyster Bay so special.

As we reached the high school, these moments didn't stop. We duct-taped Mr. McCarthy to the wall for an incredible 2 seconds, made our college pillows in Ms. Woodman's class, and even constructed racecars in Mr. Rotolo's class. And we can never forget performing at THE Carnegie Hall, getting home at midnight exhausted, yet amazed at the day we had. Our final lip sync was also a special moment after finally winning this year with our summer outfits and graduation caps. And our performance at the football field was one of our best ones yet, as the music shorted out and we kept on dancing and trying our best to remember the lyrics to "Summer of 69" - a song that was none of us knew.

So many of us look towards the notion of graduating as finally being free. Some of us are remaining in New York while others are going as far as California and even Canada. Wherever life may take us, we'll forever be together as Oyster Bay High School Class of 2019.

And as we move on to the next stage of our lives, there are others who are also doing the same as we wish the best to Ms. Heidi Gross, who made Physics fun every day, Ms. Antonia Woodman, who taught us how to sew, Mr. Kevin McCarthy who supported all learners, Mr. Scott Lyle and Pete the Custodian who helped in setting up so many events, and Ms. Debbie Hom, who brought science to life for many students and whom I am not related to.

We have come a long way from our first days as seventh graders. As we move forward on our next journey, we must continue to challenge ourselves. To commit to a passion. To learn. To raise our voices. To fall and get up. We are free of the adolescent world, but grateful for all that it has taught us. In the words of Ellen DeGeneres: "Never follow anyone else's **path**, unless you're in the woods and you're lost and you see a **path**. Then by all means follow that **path**."

Thank you and Congratulations Class of 2019!

