

## **Rebecca Silverman's Valedictorian's Address Huntington High School Graduation – 2010**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I have received quite a lot of advice when it comes to this particular speech. My friends and family have inquired on a consistent basis for the past year on whether or not I had written it yet, and my teachers have imparted upon me little suggestions over the past few months. I have been encouraged to include a meaningful metaphor, prodded to mention the sciences (and physics in particular), advised to include an important quote, and begged to above all not bore my audience to death. So, I will strive not to disappoint any of the people who took the time to give such considerate advice and if I fail abysmally I ask in advance for your forgiveness.

I will, after all, be attending an institute of technology in the fall, so perhaps it's only fitting that the sciences make an appearance in my address. The four years of high school are actually quite remarkably similar to the evolution we learn about in biology. We enter as freshmen with rather underdeveloped brains and four years later, as I'm sure many of our parents will testify, we have evolved and diversified into what is practically another species. And while it is a well known fact that chemistry plays a large role in everything from high school classes to high school relationships, there are certain chemical equations that we have found to be invaluable in our high school career. For example, good teachers + managing to stay awake in class + actually doing your work + energy → good grades + happy parents + exhaustion. You can even bring math into the picture by figuring out that if you negate any of the reactants in that equation you end up with negated products. For example, not managing to stay awake in class yields unhappy

parents. You get the idea. Now each of us has come to this point by inputting various reactants and thus getting back different products. And as any physics teacher will tell you, we're all leaving here with a slightly different velocity. The equation for velocity is distance over time. Well, we've all spent the past four years, 180 days of each year, 7 hours of each day, in high school. That's 18,144,000 seconds of time, and most of us have spent much more than that between clubs and sports and extra help. But assuming we all spent approximately the same amount of time in high school, over the years we've all traveled different distances. Some of us have made great leaps and bounds while others have chosen to move smaller distances at more steady paces. And so, for the first time in our lives, we are ready to move off at different velocities in different directions to new schools, new states, and even new countries.

This journey we are about to embark upon takes place in a world that is rapidly changing. There are certain comments that our generation has become accustomed to hearing that would be completely incomprehensible mere decades before. It has become commonplace for me to hear, "Stop texting at the dinner table!" or "Ohhh is that your facebook page?" from a parent who is peering over the edge of my computer. And as many detriments as there may be to the instant gratification that this technology has taught our generation to take for granted, there is something it has also given us that I am infinitely grateful for. A few weeks ago, I realized how incredibly fortunate I am to have a network of so many wonderful people who are there for me when I need them. Since I came to this district eight years ago, I have cultivated friendships with some of the most incredible people I ever hope to meet. And whether I'm catching a word with someone as I pass them in the

hallway, texting someone else to ask for advice, or facebooking a friend at some ridiculously late hour of the night, I know that my network of friends will never let me down. This class that you see sitting behind me is comprised of some of the most talented, intelligent, compassionate, and dedicated people that I ever hope to meet in this lifetime. I only wish I had more time to get to know each and every one of my amazing classmates whose skills have left me in awe more times than I can count. I have met the most gifted actors, heard the most angelic voices, listened to the wildest philosophical debates, announced the names of the most exceptional athletes, gazed upon the most gorgeous works of art and still I find every day that my classmates have even more astounding skills to offer. And often I have found that it is the quiet girl who smiles at you in the hallway, or the guy who offers to carry your books when you're about to collapse that, once you get to know them, are truly the most incredible people of all. I am honored to be a part of this class and to be able to count so many of these wonderful people as my friends. I know in my heart, that while we may have very different futures in store for us, the bonds we have made these past years are too strong to ever break.

It is customary for me to offer some words of advice to my departing classmates. I have instead, not so much advice to offer, but instead a mission. I have expounded upon the many virtues of this class and thus it is remarkably clear that ahead of us we all have bright futures just waiting for us to achieve our full potentials. So now I must reveal myself to be the tree-hugger that I have so often been called in the halls of this high school. For I have a mission for each and every one of you. We live in a world where success is defined by a dollar sign and we are judged by the labels in our clothing. I implore you to, instead of striving merely to put money in a bank

account, use that shining potential for one thing. Make a difference. Change this world, even if it's in the smallest bit, and make it a better place. Just think about it; which would be better? Being the multi-millionaire CEO of an oil company that is killing the environment, or being the engineer who discovers how to make drilling for oil more environmentally friendly? Then again, you may not find the cure for cancer or single-handedly achieve world peace, but all it takes is a little work and a little dedication to impact the world or someone's life in a positive and lasting manner. If each person here made just the smallest bit of difference, you know what? Together we would make a pretty big difference. We've been told one day we'll be all grown up and the world will be our responsibility. So let's make it our mission that when that day comes, we'll be ready to, bit by bit, make this world a better place.

A very wise old bear once said, "You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes." Well, if Winnie the Pooh were here, he would tell us that we have spent these years of our life in our own, safe little corner of the forest. Some of us have ventured out into the woods farther than others, but most of us have been content to stay in this part of the Hundred Acre Wood where we know there will always be a nice jar of honey in the cupboard. But at last the time has come to venture out and explore, and who knows? Perhaps we'll meet someone who likes to bounce a lot, or find a friend we can play poohsticks with. But a word to the wise, as Pooh Bear says, "People who don't think probably don't have brains; rather, they have grey fluff that's blown into their heads by mistake." So in addition to watching out for heffalumps and woozles, keep your brains about you these next few years

and keep an eye out for any grey fluff that's blowing around as you journey out into the forest.

Now before I finally stop talking I would like to take a moment to thank all the people who have brought us to this point: our parents and relatives who have worked tirelessly to encourage and support us even when all we did was whine, the teachers, administrators, counselors, and secretaries who have succeeded brilliantly at the exhausting job of trying to educate hundreds of moody teenagers, and of course all of our friends who have been there for us no matter what. So graduates, I leave you with one more mission: to personally thank each and every one of these people before you start upon your path to the future. We would never have achieved as much as we have without them.

Hence, to all the members of the Class of 2010, congratulations, and on this Final Friday, I wish you a gratifying graduation and a stupendous summer!

## **Alanna Tieman's Salutatorian's Address Huntington High School Graduation - 2010**

From this point onward, our lives will never be the same. We have reached a milestone today. For the past thirteen years we have been told where to be five out of the seven days of the week and when to be there. We have been told what to study and how. Our freedom to make our own decisions was limited. We were like ocean liners being pulled and guided by tugboats safely out of the harbor. And we have now reached open water.

Here, we will all go our separate ways. The ocean is vast and wide, as are our options. Maybe some of our courses will overlap at points, or mirror each other's, but each path we will all soon traverse will be unique. We have been advised on which course to take, but in the end only we can decide our fates. We now have the freedom and the responsibility to choose our own path and follow it wherever it may take us.

The tugboats: our parents, teachers, friends, and others who have guided us, helped us to avoid disaster. From them we have learned much about life and how the world works. When we strayed too close to potential collisions, the tugboats brought us back to the path that would lead us here, to our future. We have learned the ropes. We have been given the compass. And now it is time for us to embark on our own journey, a journey full of exploration and uncertainties. Though we may need to radio the shore for advice or maybe some of us even for a full-blown rescue mission, we are ultimately on our own now.

As we travel onward, the influences of our past will remain always, but this new independence will allow for us to truly discover our own ideas, and in our own way. Our different interests and goals for the future will lead us in different directions. But yet, our lives are irrevocably intertwined in

that we all share the experience of Huntington High School. During our years together at Huntington High School we have forged a bond that will keep us connected, however far away our paths may lead us. Whether it's a best friend, or a friendly face passed in the hallway, whether it's a friend since first grade, or one made just last year, we all have had an impact on each other in some way, either directly or indirectly. I personally am proud to be a part of Huntington High School's Class of 2010, without a doubt the best class ever.

So as we go forth into this crazy world we have to remember all of the valuable lessons we have learned at Huntington, both in and out of the classroom, and we have to remember and appreciate the wonderful people that taught them to us: our parents, our teachers, our family, our friends, the administrators, and the support staff, all of whom allow for learning to take place, and without whom the school could not function. Because of these people we have been given all of the basic information and tools to survive. Now we just have to choose our course and explore it.

The captain's wheel is now ours. We must steer carefully, for the impact of our decisions will create many waves. It is important that we all go about continuing to promote the values we have learned in this great community such as kindness, integrity, tolerance, and perseverance, and that we continue to practice the responsibility to our fellow man that is a necessity in this world. While sailing the uncharted waters ahead, let these values be the stars by which we navigate. I hope each of us remembers these words by the poet William Ernest Henly, "It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul."

Congratulations to all of you! We did it!

## **Principal Carmela Leonardi's Huntington High School Graduation Speech - 2010**

It is an honor for me to welcome students, faculty, parents, family members and members of the School Board here tonight. Before I present my remarks I would like to take this opportunity to thank the assistant principal, Mr. Noce, all department administrators and deans for their work with students and their families. A special thank you goes to the teachers and support personnel who are committed to the success of every student at Huntington High School and continue to take a personal interest in their academic and social development. Our gratitude is extended to secretaries, security and custodians who work daily to support students, teachers, administrators and parents alike. Education is mankind's most enduring asset. Treasure it. Nurture it. Share it. And invest in a better future for yourself and for those who come after you.

It has become my practice, in preparing for this important event, to reflect on the qualities and gifts members of the senior class have displayed in their four years at Huntington High School. I would like to share with you just some of their achievements. Members of the class of 2010 continue a tradition of service to their community. In fact, many have devoted countless hours in support of organizations such as Hi Hi, Family Service League, Boys and Girls Scouts of America. Members of this class also led extensive fundraising efforts to help the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and "Stuffed a Bus" full of non perishable food to be used by local food pantries. The class of 2010 has gifted athletes who will be playing competitive college level Lacrosse. One of our seniors has also shown the kind of leadership in the International Key club organization to hold the

position of Lieutenant Governor at the State level and compete for an international post. What characterizes this group of seniors is also the fact that aside from being academically gifted they are also artistically talented. A larger number of the seniors before you took AP exams, played in band and orchestra and sang in chorus. More participated in plays, and were recognized for their work in the visual arts. Some lucky seniors traveled to Washington and were recognized by our First Lady, Michelle Obama, for the creativity they showed in a service project developed by their Fashion teachers Mrs. Singer and Mrs. Worth. They are for the most part artistic brainiacs who are following their passions at the same time that they intentionally pursue academic learning.

In these continued hard economic times, Huntington High School seniors considered all options before making their college selections. Almost all of our students chose to go to college, whether four year schools or two year colleges with excellent reputations.

And now some hard data about all that they have accomplished. Many of our seniors challenged themselves with Advanced Placement courses that have the potential of earning them college level credits. 116 seniors took AP exams. 56 took three AP exams or more with 1 student taking 6 and one taking 7 AP exams each for a collective total of 308 AP tests.

For this senior class, the college center processed 1,407 college applications. As of today the class of 2010 received \$ 7,714,930 in scholarship money. 90% of the 256 students sitting here today will be going to college. 2 % will attend career oriented programs, 1.2% enlisted in the military, 2.4% will be taking a gap year traveling to Israel and Greece before beginning college and 1% will join the workforce.

Students will be attending Dartmouth, Columbia, Cornell, all SUNY and various out of state public and private colleges and universities including Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Virginia, University of NC at Chapel Hill, Carnegie Mellon University, Vanderbilt University, the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, Boston College, Georgetown, NYU, Fordham, Maryland Institute of Art, Nassau and Suffolk Community Colleges, Binghamton University, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Hofstra University, Parsons School of Design, University of Limerick(Ireland), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, St. John's University, Syracuse University, La Guardia Community College, Virginia Tech and the University of Michigan to name a few.

Some of the interesting majors they have selected include: Biomedical Engineering, Film and Televisions Studies, Nursing, Information Systems, Engineering, Visual Communications, Astrophysics, Environmental Studies, Fashion Design and Merchandizing, 3D Graphics and Animation, Music, Business Management, Sports Management, Psychology, Elementary Education, Music Performance, Music Art and Dance Education, Special Education, Spanish, Human Services, Social Work, Business, Accounting , Marine Biology, Photography, Culinary Arts, Forensic and Nutrition.

My wish for all graduates today is that they use their gifts and talents to get ahead in the world and to make it a better place for generations to come. It will not always be easy to do the right thing, but remember that doing the right thing is the only choice any of us have if we want to remain true to yourself.

Congratulations!

## **School Board President Bill Dwyer's Huntington High School Graduation Speech - 2010**

Thank you for the introduction Lori.

On behalf of the Board of Education I'd like to welcome everyone to this year's commencement ceremony. I extend this welcome to members of our central administration, to our high school administrators and faculty, and most importantly, to our graduating students, your family and friends.

I'll be brief in my remarks for I know that the longer I speak, the more your thoughts will wander towards the plans you've made for the rest of the evening...the celebrations you all so richly deserve.

As you sit there in your caps and gowns, allow your thoughts to wander back for a moment and reflect on what you've accomplished. You've mastered reading, writing and arithmetic, history, science and foreign languages. In doing so you've had the benefit of dedicated and experienced teachers willing to challenge you to learn, at times, more than some of you would have preferred. Many of you have taken advantage of the tremendous arts, music and athletic programs the district maintains. Also, In your time here at Huntington High School you've matured tremendously as individuals. How many of you looked at the incoming freshman at the beginning of this year and wondered whether a Finley bus had mistakenly dropped its kids off at the wrong school? Well, let me assure you that when you were freshmen the seniors thought the same thing about you. But you have grown, and as you've grown you've learned to enjoy the additional freedoms you've been granted and the responsibility that comes with them. The knowledge that you've

gained from your studies along with all of the other personal experiences you had as a member of our school community have prepared you well for whatever comes next in your life. So, while the diplomas you will receive this evening signify that you've completed all of the academic requirements for graduation, understand that they embody much more.

Your high school graduation is a like a waypoint on a GPS navigation unit plotting your journey through life. It's a point that marks the divider between the travels you've completed and the miles that lie ahead. Some of you may have your unit already programmed to a specific destination, set with the map display zoomed way out so that you can clearly see where you are now, where your destination is as well as all the roads required to get you there. And some of you may not have any destinations programmed in yet. You have that display zoomed in real tight so that all you see is the road right in front of you and you proceed eagerly forward in life waiting to see what opportunities pop up on the screen next. Either way you've reached a waypoint in your life's road trip and it's good that you take some time to appreciate it.

From here you begin the next part of your journey. That may include going to college or a trade school, or you might go right to work. Whatever it is that you choose do so knowing that you are well prepared for what lies ahead of you in life.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I'd like to congratulate you, the graduates and your families, and wish you the best of luck going forward.

Make us proud. I have no doubt that you will.

## **Superintendent John J. Finello's Huntington High School Graduation Speech – 2010**

Thank you for your introduction Alexandra.

Members of the Board of Education, colleagues in administration, distinguished members of the faculty, class officers, families, friends and most importantly members of the Class of 2010.

This afternoon I look out on so many smiling and happy faces – young men and women ready to greet the future, knowing your possibilities are limitless. You are prepared and ready to move on to life beyond Huntington High School. It is indeed gratifying to see that you have matured and become proficient, ready to tackle the challenges that lie ahead as you seek and work toward your goals. You are ready for new opportunities and welcome the changes that await you.

I look back this afternoon on your journey – a journey that started with the small, tentative steps of a Kindergartener. Looking out into this sea of blue and white, I see just how far you have progressed; you possess the pride and confidence of a high school graduate. It has been an honor and a privilege to be part of your journey; a journey filled with wonderful memories of all those who have supported you throughout your education in Huntington. Your parents have helped you, encouraged you, picked you up when you fell down and loved you unconditionally. Our many gifted and talented teachers have helped you to discover your abilities and to develop an inquiring mind. I assure you that although you are moving beyond high school those same teachers will remember you, hoping their encouragement has traveled with you on your journey. Your coaches and advisors have nurtured you outside the classroom

through lessons of cooperation, sportsmanship, competition and compassion. There are countless individuals who have supported you some whose influence is known only to you. Then, of course, there are your friends who surround you today. Some of those friendships might be relatively new or may extend to your pre-school days. Nurture those friendships and carry them forward as new people enter your life. There are so many facets to the wonderful memories you have collected. Treasure them all.

Today concludes a significant and wonderful chapter of your life; an equally significant and wonderful chapter is about to begin. A chapter replete with the adventures of the adults you are becoming. You are leaving a world where others have made decisions for you; you are about to leave your “comfort zone.” Soon you will be making decisions, solving problems; deciding which road to travel. It sounds exciting, and it will be, but it will also have its challenges. When you are challenged or discouraged I hope you will remember your years in Huntington and the lessons learned at home and in school. They will give you strength and courage. Have faith in yourself and the unique individual you are; be true to yourself. Instead of the world changing you, you can help change the world.

Your family has nurtured you, the Huntington School District has guided you and now it is your turn to identify and acknowledge your strengths, talents and interests. Find what you love, be passionate about it – learn all you can. Be kind, considerate and positive. Take time for others, be an active member of your community, volunteer your time. There is a great need for generous, caring people in our world.

I would like to thank all those who have guided, molded and shaped the Class of 2010. Your role has been instrumental in preparing our graduates for the challenges of the future. The

accomplishments of the members of this senior class are outstanding and it is gratifying to know the Huntington High School Class of 2010 will be well represented in colleges and universities throughout our nation. You leave us with an indelible legacy of excellence and achievement in the fine tradition of the Huntington School District.

To the Class of 2010 I wish you luck as you go on your way. I trust you will make the most of the opportunities you have been given. With the knowledge you have gained in school, with the guidance of your family and with the wonderful friendships you have made I am confident you will find success and happiness.

Congratulations to the Huntington High School Class of 2010!