

## **School Board President Bill Dwyer's Huntington High School Graduation Speech - 2009**

Thank you for the introduction Andrew.

On behalf of the Board of Education I'd like to welcome everyone to this years 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.

Graduates, let me share with you my perspective on the wonderful event that high school graduation is. You see, being that I'm, um, not as young as you, I've been through several of my own commencement ceremonies and since have had time to properly understand where they fit amongst all the other things that go on in life.

You see, life is a journey, but along the way, we stop to celebrate milestones, and high school graduation is a biggie, not only for you, but for your parents as well. You've all worked hard to get to this point and it really is worth celebrating.

It is a good time to look back on all you've accomplished and all the good times you've had along the way, while understanding that your future is full of opportunity waiting for you to grab hold of it and say, "Hey, let's go do something good." So you're celebrating both an ending and a beginning.

The ending, of course, is of your education in our District's schools. You've been taught reading, writing and arithmetic, history, science and foreign languages. You have had the benefit of dedicated and experienced teachers willing to challenge

you to learn, at times, more than some of you would have preferred. 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. Many of you have taken advantage of the wide range of art and music programs we have to offer. And a large number of you have participated and excelled in our athletic programs, learning the value of dedication and teamwork. You've traveled to other communities as ambassadors of Huntington High School whether it was competing on sports teams, in academic competitions, or with the marching band. These have all been experiences that contribute to your overall education. You've developed social skills in interacting with your classmates and teachers, and you've learned to enjoy additional freedoms you've been granted as you've gotten older and the responsibility that comes with them. All of these things have helped to prepare you for whatever comes next in your life.

And that brings me to the beginning....You are ready to start a new chapter in your life, and it is a chapter where you write your own story. You see, up until this point, you have been ours. Your education has been mandatory. Like it or not, you had to get up every morning and go to school. But now the choices become yours. Many of you will go on to further your education at colleges, whether they be two year or four year programs, or trade schools. But these will be schools of your choosing, in courses of study that you are interested in. And if you're not sure yet what it is that really interests you, don't worry, give it time. Go out there with your eyes and mind wide open and you'll figure it out soon enough. Others may choose to go to work. To you my advice is to find a job that's interesting...but even if it's not interesting at first, give it some time. When you immerse yourself in something, you may be surprised at the things that grab your attention. Several

graduates have chosen to enlist in military service. To you I say a sincere, “Thank you. We truly appreciate the commitment you are making.

Some people will stay local, while others will move away or even move abroad, even if it’s just temporary. I advise you to take in the sights and attractions of where ever you end up. It’s all educational and a lot of fun too.

Before I finish, let me give you a little more perspective, this time not because I’m not as young as you and have already done the graduation thing, but because I’ve moved around in my life. I grew up in Middlebury, CT, a small town midway between New Haven and Hartford. So small in fact that the road I lived on was named “Dwyer Rd.” I couldn’t do anything around town without it getting back to my parents. But it was a good place to grow up. Since then I’ve lived in Providence, Boston, St. Louis, and Los Angeles, and each place was unique. But for me, none compares to Huntington. I tell my family that Huntington is the biggest small town I’ve ever encountered, with the added benefit of being an incredibly diverse community. Whenever you go into town, you’re sure to run into someone you know. And I’ll bet that many of you graduates have found that what you do in town, often times gets back to your parents, for better or worse. But as you get older, you’ll come to appreciate the nurturing aspect of a community like ours and don’t be surprised that when you settle down to start your own family, if you look for a community just like this, if its not here that you’re already living.

Combine this nurturing environment in which you’ve been raised with the solid educational foundation that you have worked hard to construct and you are well prepared to take your next steps in life. I urge you all...Please take those steps  
CONFIDENTLY.

So you see your graduation is an ending worth celebrating, but it is also a confident new beginning, and surely, a memorable milestone on your journey through life.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I'd like to congratulate you all, and wish you the best of luck going forward. Make us proud. I have no doubt that you will.