

Allen Park **William Kiefer, Superintendent**

President Mullican, distinguished members of the Board of Education, State Representative of the 25th District Robert DeMars, His Honor Mayor Kenneth Ford, Principal Bender, administrators and faculty, and the Allen Park High School graduation Class of 1996, it is an honor and a privilege to be here for this very important occasion. I am delighted to share this special moment with you, for it will be our last together. I sense that you are eager for this ceremony to end so that you can receive your diploma and get on with the rest of your life. Therefore, I promise you that my congratulatory message will not be too unbearably long.

Two observations I would offer to you that are worth remembering. First, since the dawn of man, adults have decried the young, for the young, after all, represent change—change in values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and lifestyles. While many of us yearn for yesterday, those days are long gone. Second, for the first time in history, a generation of young people is expected to fare worse economically than their parents. We adults, i.e., teachers, parents, are afraid for today's young people—afraid that you'll never live the American dream.

I don't know the source of the quote, but it is one that is very apropos to this occasion: "The altitude that you achieve in your career is determined more by your attitude than your aptitude." As you reflect back, I am certain that you will realize that whenever you have really wanted to conquer something, you have mastered it. You know that whenever you have wanted to do something, or learn something, regardless of how difficult, when you internalized the desire to succeed, you did succeed. That is precisely why you are sitting here today.

Obviously, learning does not end when you graduate from high school, or even from college—it is a life-long experience. But rest assured, you are taking with you the skills and knowledge that you need to succeed in life.

Set your expectations high; believe in yourself; strive for excellence in everything you do; make it your trademark. Respect others as unique human beings; value honesty and integrity, and you will always be able to look yourself in the eye.

As you begin the next phase in your life, I encourage you to accept the future as a new challenge, always having confidence that you can accomplish whatever you set out to do—never give up trying. Take pride in things that you accomplish. When you are wrong, don't hesitate to take the blame. Learn from the failure because it really is an opportunity. Turn it around. Listen to those who give you advice, but judge for yourself what is right. Set your own goals and stand firmly

by your convictions and what you believe in. Always look on the positive side, and try to surround yourself with positive people.

Our potential is a direct result of our self esteem, i.e., how we feel about ourselves. If we regard ourselves more highly, then we can come to expect more of ourselves. This growth process results in more aggressive goals, greater expectations and more impressive achievements. I'm talking about positive self-regard or emotional wisdom.

As promised, I am going to stick to the three B's for public speakers:

Be on time

Be brief

Be seated

But before I take my seat, let me leave you with a final thought that I think is appropriate for this occasion.

You will assume many rights and privileges as adults, but it will bring with it some awesome responsibilities. How you choose to deal with them will forever define you as a person and a member of the human race. Appreciate and apply the notion that choices have consequences (positive or negative). Practice the art of thinking before acting. The very fact that you have completed your studies and are part of this audience today means that the last 13 years have prepared you to accept those responsibilities and to meet those demands. Therefore, take what you have learned and use it.

One final thought: when a moment passes by it is gone forever, and nothing can recall it. In Shakespeare's words, "What's done cannot be undone." There is a large-looming future out there awaiting all of you which ought to be seized aggressively so that your lives will be filled with time well-spent and years well-lived. Take the future and let it be yours; make the world and your place in it what they ought to be. In other words, make it count!

On behalf of the entire school family of the Allen Park Public Schools, I wish each and every one of you the happiness of a productive life. May the future be yours!