

Dearborn Heights School District No. 7

Andrew DeSaeger, Superintendent

Good evening, honored graduates of the class of '96, family and friends. On behalf of the Board of Education, I would like to extend to the graduates hearty congratulations for the success that you have achieved to date.

The Dearborn Heights School District No. 7 schools as a whole have been your safe haven for the last 13 years. In order for you to appreciate where you are today, let's take a look at where you were five years ago. Five years ago at this time, you were exiting 7th grade. Most of you were a foot shorter; most of you were a lot smaller, all of you changed significantly physically from 7th grade until now. In the next couple of months, you will have an opportunity to talk to your parents, and they will deny that 7th grade through 12th grade was five years. In some instances, it has seemed like an eternity – that there is no way in the structure of your world that 7th grade to 12th grade was a five-year period of time. Too much has happened, too much change has occurred, too much emotional, physiological and social change.

Let's take a look at the next five years. There won't be as much physiological change, but there will be a great deal more in the area of social change. There will be a great deal more change in the area of responsibility for yourself. Also, five years from now, you will be amazed at how those of you who go to school, those of you who go to the military, and those of you who go to any kind of training (including on-the-job training) with your careers will be absolutely overwhelmed with how much brighter your parents get over the next 5 years. I can guarantee you that 5 years from now your parents will be immensely brilliant compared to 5 years ago. I think a lot of that has to do with perspective, a lot of that has to do with personal accountability and responsibility and a lot of that has to do with who is calling the shots.

Ten years from now, many of you will be in a totally different world than you are today. You will be the one making decisions for others. You will be the one making decisions on life, a family, a social structure, ownership, and how decisions are truly made.

Remember that kind teacher who you respected, who told you to play fair, who taught you to share, who taught you all those rules of Kindergarten on the playground, because those are the basic rules of society. If we all treat each other well, we all respect each other, we share, we support one another, we sacrifice for others; that we learn to play rather than dominate; that we learn to win as a team. In all those lessons you have practiced for 12 years, sometimes better than others, you have all learned ownership, and you have all learned responsibility.

It is now your time to go forth and to continue that education. If we have done one thing right, it's not the facts we have forced into your head, not the concepts we have forced you to learn, but the fact that we have taught you to be good learners who will continue to learn.

Again, congratulations and good luck. Please make us as proud of you in the future as we are proud of you this evening. Congratulations to the Class of '96.