

Harper Woods Joan Tucker, Superintendent

Board of Education; administrators and staff; parents, relatives, and friends; and especially graduates:

Congratulations Class of 96!

Today is the day you have been working toward since you entered kindergarten 13 years ago. Earlier this week I was at the kindergarten celebration at Beacon and couldn't help thinking how only 12 short years ago you were that small, having just completed the first year of your formal education. As those six year olds held up their little hands, they recited for their parents a poem called "Handprint," and part of it goes like this:

Sometimes you get discourage because I am so small,
I always leave my fingerprints on furniture and wall.
But every day I'm growing up and soon I'll be so tall,
That all those little handprints will be hard to recall.

You certainly have grown up and to your parents here tonight, it probably seems like only yesterday when your little handprints were on the furniture and walls.

Your handprints are much larger now, and tonight is the beginning of your lives in the adult world; it is also an ending to a chapter in your life. Tonight is the closing of your high school books, and for some of you the ending of your formal education. For *all* of you, even those going on to a college or university, it is the ending to the time when you were guided, reminded, and lead. It is the ending of those days referred to as "childhood."

When you were babies, your attention was occupied for hours by a rattle, watching your hands, or chewing on your toes. When you were small children, a new toy filled you with joy. As preteens you, no doubt, discovered the telephone, and your parents wondered if they would have to have that device surgically removed from your ear. Then as teenagers, new interests and ideas began to form and the ways of your former years became less important.

Tonight you take a major step. Tonight you put aside those trappings of childhood and turn your eyes to the future—eyes that now see with a wider scope and deeper perspective than those of a boy or a girl who ran, freely, across the playgrounds of our schools. But, I urge you not to lay aside all the experiences of your childhood. Take with you the learning and growth you accumulated in school. Take with you the excitement and the joy that marked the progress of your self-discovery and the world around you. Take with you the childhood wonder that allowed you to reach out toward the unknown and make it yours.

Most of all, take with you the spirit that has guided you through these years and will continue to guide you through the years to come.

Your graduation is just one step on your life's journey. It is a time to celebrate your success and prepare for the opportunities and the challenges of the future. As you continue your journey, reach high for your goal but don't forget the joy that can be yours along the way. There is no greater than sharing the magic of laughter, the harmony of friendship, and the beauty of love.

I'd like to close my remarks with a poem that is a favorite of mine. I've used it before but because it is so appropriate for graduation, I'd like to share it with you.

When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king or queen for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man or woman has to say.
For it isn't your father, mother, husband, or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The one whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
You may be like Jack Horner and chisel a plum
And think you're a wonderful gal or guy.
But the one in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him or her straight in the eye.

Believe in yourself; strive for excellence in everything you do; respect others; value honesty and integrity; and you will always be able to look yourself straight in the eye.

Each of you is unique and a very special person. We will miss you!
Congratulations, Good luck, and may all your dreams come true!