

Southgate High School Stanley Mazur, Superintendent

Good evening graduates, family members, friends and guests. I consider it an honor to be here with you on this special occasion.

It is my pleasure to introduce the members of the Board of Education who are responsible for the governance of our School District. They make policy by which we operate. They are responsible for everything that happens in the District— budget, educational programs, extracurricular activities, this graduation.

This responsibility takes a great deal of time and energy with little or no pay. As I work with these Board members throughout the year, I can attest that their greatest reward is your success, and your graduation is indeed a special occasion to them also.

The President of the Board of Education is:

Mr. Elmer “Butch” McCans	
Mr. David Shoemaker	Vice President
Mr. Mark Mullis	Secretary
Mr. Gerald Doede	Assistant Secretary
Mr. John Maniaci	Treasurer
Mrs. Kimber Labadie	Trustee
Mrs. Linda Scheer	Trustee

I would also like to introduce our Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Michael Kell.

Class of 1996, graduation is a happy time filled with excitement and a sense of accomplishment; but it is also bittersweet with the realization that you will be separated from your friends and will be facing an uncertain future. Certainly your life will be different than the past 12 years.

Graduates, I am sure that you have received much advice regarding the skills required to be successful in your life. The importance of technology, communication, math, science, and problem solving skills is often discussed.

However, if the unknown author was here tonight who said:

Watch your thoughts, they become words.

Watch your words, they become actions.

Watch your actions, they become habits.

Watch your habits, they become character.

Watch your character, it becomes your destiny.

He or she would advise you to be true to yourself, your family, friends and community. While we want you to be successful, to get that job or profession which you thoroughly enjoy, earn lots of money, become powerful and

influential, the true measure of success is the kind of person that you are, your relationships with others, your willingness to give back to the community in which you live, your ability to enjoy life's simple pleasures—a beautiful sunset, a child laughing, a flower, an evening with friends and family.

This unknown author would also advise you that by being attentive to those values that make up your character, you will also increase your ability to attain material success. The top ten characteristics for successful employment as identified by business and industry leaders are dominated by character related issues such as having a positive attitude, responsibility, integrity, honesty/reliability, the ability to get along with others and a willingness to learn and to work.

In a lecture at Harvard University over 150 years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson made this assertion: “Character is higher than intellect.” He knew that intellect can grow and grow, but how one uses that intellect is most important—to have well-thought out principles that guide your actions and are a basis for your decisions throughout your life and to do what you know is right.

I decided to center my comments on the character issues for success because you are an outstanding group of seniors—highly motivated students who care for each other, students who have worked hard, who possess great character, and are the leaders of tomorrow. I want you to know that you are on the right path.

This country does indeed need leaders in all walks of life that possess a well developed set of guiding principles of good character: leaders who do the right thing. So continue with your education and become the involved community members and the leaders that we are confident that you will be.

On behalf of the Board of Education, the Administration, teachers and school family, I want to thank your parents for sending us such outstanding children. I extend hardy congratulations to you seniors and good luck to you in your future endeavors.