

Members of the School Board, Administration, Faculty, Support Staff, Parents, Families, Friends and most importantly, the Class of 2023, I am truly honored to speak to each and every one of you this evening to **Congratulate** the Students and Families of the Class of 2023 on their graduation from Upper Perkiomen High School.

For most of you, your Upper Perk journey began 13 years ago as you started your academic career in an Upper Perk Kindergarten Classroom at either Hereford or Marlborough Elementary School. The excitement and energy that your parents and family felt on your first day of Kindergarten can only be matched by the passion and pride that can be felt tonight during your procession into the stadium!

Over the past 13 years, members of the Class of 2023 spent countless hours inside the classroom, faced numerous hurdles and challenges that tested their resilience, determination, and adaptability. At the same time, each of you had to navigate the buses, hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms at each school while also surviving both virtual and hybrid learning phases and to top it all off, somehow you (well most of you) continued to arrive at school on time despite the Main Street bridge closure this school year!

But let us not forget that within all of those hurdles lay invaluable teaching moments. You learned the power of perseverance, pushing each other even when the odds seemed stacked against you. Class of 2023, your ability to rise above adversity, to support one another, and to continue pushing forward with unwavering determination is a testament to your character and strength. No one could have predicted what your high school career would have looked like but what is clearly evident to everyone sitting here today is that you, the Class of 2023, are resilient and represent the best of Upper Perk!

I stand before you as the proud Superintendent of Upper Perk, reflecting on the remarkable journey that has brought us all together. The last four years have not only marked your entire high school career but have also been a transformative period for our district. I am incredibly grateful to have been alongside you during these last four years. You hold a unique distinction as the students who “missed the new middle school”. Instead you are the last class who transitioned directly from Jefferson Street Middle School to Upper Perkiomen High School and together, you embraced it with grace and adaptability.

Your 9th grade year took an unexpected turn. In March of 2020, everything changed. You left school one day, expecting to return soon, only to find yourselves completing your freshman year and part of your sophomore year through virtual learning. But as the world started to show signs of improvement, your junior and senior years provided a sense of stability and normalcy.

During this time, you took full advantage of all the opportunities that Upper Perkiomen High School had to offer!

Many of you continued as virtual students during your junior and senior years, and that needs to be acknowledged and celebrated. Learning in a virtual environment is a challenge, and your dedication to complete your education in the face of those obstacles is truly commendable.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional achievements of the Class of 2023 students who attended the Western Center. These students have not only excelled but have also set a remarkably high standard for future Upper Perk students who are currently and will be joining the Western Center. Speaking of the students that attended the Western Center, I'd like to ask all of the students in the Class of 2023 that attended the Western Center to please stand up to be recognized this evening in front of your peers and family for the tremendous effort and accomplishments you have achieved over the past four years.

On your journey over the past 13 years of school, I am sure your parents took many pictures and provided daily support and love to guide you along the way! You had tremendous teachers, counselors, principals and staff members at every stage to provide guidance, support, homework and consequences, if appropriate, and all of those experiences helped to get you to this point in your life. Please take some time during this celebration to reflect and say "Thank You" to your entire support group of family, friends, school staff and anyone that has had a positive influence in your life. As I do each year during graduation, I am asking a favor this evening to the Class of 2023 – Please let your parents and family take as many pictures as they want tonight as they want to remember this special day!

As Dr. Seuss once said:

"You're off to great places!

Today is your day!

Your mountain is waiting so get on your way!"

With your graduation from Upper Perkiomen High School, we are confident that you are ready for the new opportunities and challenges that you will face. But there will be a few things that you will miss about Upper Perk. Many of you will miss Dr. Carpenter giving his morning announcements and updates over the PA system or being asked by Mr. Amsler or Mrs. Senavaitis for your Smart Pass to come to the office. Some of you may miss the smiles and welcoming faces from your bus drivers, cafeteria staff, main office and guidance staff or even the daily "Hello" from Mr. Blake. Great Outdoors Day, Pep Rallies, after school practices and

games for athletics, marching band camp, the yearly musical, countless choral rehearsals and watching Tribe Talk during homeroom in addition to all of the club activities are just a few more highlights that you may miss next year. You are at the point where the memories of Upper Perk High School will only grow stronger and one day you will say “Well when I was in High School...” and then you will realize that after this experience, Upper Perk provided you with an excellent high school education and foundation for success.

To the Class of 2023. I wish you the best of luck. With the knowledge and experience you have gained in school, with the guidance and support of your family and friends and with your personal commitment to excellence, you will find success and happiness.

To quote Augee Pullman from the book *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio, “Everyone Deserves a Standing Ovation at Least Once in their Lives!” To all of the parents, family members, teachers, staff, and administration here this evening, I ask you to join me in showing our appreciation, pride and unwavering support for the Class of 2023 with a heartwarming and powerful standing ovation.

Congratulations to the Class of 2023!!