

# President of the Board of Education Keith Kolar

## To the Class of 2018

Thank you Mr. Hoffer,

Good morning parents, grandparents, family members, friends, staff and administrators. Most importantly, good morning graduates. I am very happy to see that no one overslept for this special occasion.

Twenty-four years ago I was sitting on this exact field like you, with the blinding hot sun shining down on me as I told myself not to doze off as some strange person spoke to me. I do actually remember, however, listening to our Valedictorian Andrew Fullam deliver a wonderful speech. As he spoke, I realized the one and only good reason that I was one-tenth as smart as Andrew and that was I did not have to give a speech to such enormous crowd. Well now, twenty-four years later, I question how much wiser I have become as I actually volunteered for this moment. Life certainly has way of changing you. All kidding aside, I am honored to have this brief moment with you and I promise it will be brief.

In thinking about change, this class has seen its fair share of it from kindergarten to 12th grade. For one, the first iPhone was released when you were all in second grade. Now it is safe to say some second graders actually have their own. *Instagram*: this came along when you were in fifth grade. Since then many profile pics have changed and endless amounts of *finsta* accounts have been created. For those parents that don't know what a *finsta* is, ask your child.... I just learn recently myself. *Snapchat*, something that feels as if it has been with you for your entire life and none of you could imagine a world without it, has only been around since 2012. And now most recently this *Fortnite* craze. Who would have imagined a video game that could transcend generations from kindergarteners to 30-year olds?

I mention these today to point out how much has changed for you in such a short time. But you must understand while these things have brought about many positive changes for you, you have to be wary that it never takes away the one thing that has never changed in you. That is your human element. Your human element is more powerful than any app or computer. All of these wonderful advancements in technologies do not know how to show kindness, compassion, loyalty or how to form sincere genuine relationships without a human element. At the same time these technologies cannot show cruelty, indifference or dishonesty without a human element. Every one of us likes to think we are kind and compassionate but I think we all know each day we can improve in this area. Each day we have to find the best human element and make it shine. As Bill Gates said technology is unlocking the innate compassion we all have for our fellow human beings.

So as you leave here today and prepare for the next chapter in your life I want you to consider a few things.

Turning away from that screen and looking someone in the eye to tell them how you feel is always better. Experiencing a moment alone or with someone else is ok...it does not always need to be posted and shared with the world. Sometimes capturing a quick moment with your mind instead of a phone video will actually last longer. Handwriting a letter to someone special and putting a stamp on it is much more meaningful than an email. Memorizing five of your closest friends' phone numbers and calling them when they need to talk will make you both feel better. Being sad or upset is completely normal; we have all felt this way from time to time. But most of all—always—find the time to call your mother, father, grandparents or younger siblings instead of texting. You may not realize how much the sound of your voice means to them.

On behalf of the Board of Education and the Sayville School District, I wish you all the best in this next phase in your life and know with your great human element you can make this world a better place. Congratulations class of 2018!