

Dr. John Stimmel,
Superintendent of Schools
Address to the Class of 2020

Greetings to the students and families of the Sayville graduating class of 2020: I am honored and proud to stand with you today. There are two quick messages that I want to share with you.

First: our world is going through a dark time. You can be a light in the darkness.

Yours has been an eventful and unprecedented senior year but right now I would like you to think back to a time when you were very, very young.

When you were very young there's a chance that you, like most little children, may have been afraid of the dark. Even grownups can be spooked by darkness. There is something primeval about it. Darkness kindles fear and gives root to the nightmares of youth. You were fortunate though- when darkness did its dirty work to keep you up at night your loving parents came to you with a light that soothed your anxiety and allayed your fears. How can you help but smile when you think of the Hello Kitty, Thomas the Tank Engine or some such night light that got you through those dark times. Those simple lamps didn't just scatter the darkness of night, they, in a way, reminded you of how much your parents loved you.

Ignorance is also a form of darkness. Your family, your churches, community organizations and, of course, your teachers have spent the past thirteen years instilling in you the light of knowledge. To paraphrase a quote from Yeats, your parents, teachers, and other caring adults have not so much tried to fill your bucket with facts as to ignite in you a passion for learning and a love of wisdom.

So now we who have nurtured you have a request. No one lights a torch then covers it with a bucket. I urge you to bring your talents to the world. Each one of you has something unique and profound to offer our community. Whether you

serve as champions of peace, freedom or the ideals of America, never hold back and always push forward. No matter how dark the world may seem at times, always, always let your light shine!

My second message to you is simply this: Our pandemic experience is teaching us something that we have always known: your health and the love of your family are truly your most valuable possessions. Yes these are very difficult and uncertain times that we are going through, but take good care of yourself, keep your loved ones close and never doubt that your best days lay ahead.

May God bless the Sayville Class of 2020. I know that you will make a difference.