

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESIDENT KEITH KOLAR Class of 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Hoffer, Parents, relatives, staff and most importantly, Graduation Class of 2021.

I want to begin with one word: Perseverance---persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

You all have certainly persisted in achieving many things despite the difficulties they presented this past year.

On top of that, many things delayed you in achieving those same successes but here you are today. You have persisted and persevered and you all deserve to be applauded.

I think we can all agree that often we see our perseverance in isolation as it is usually visible through our own personal struggle. One thing that we have learned in this past year is each one of us has our own personal story of perseverance. For some it was the loss of a sports season, or a loss of a normal school day, or a loss of a long-planned family vacation, or a loss of job or for some it was the ultimate loss the loss of a loved one. And for some, it was simply quarantining itself that awoke their perseverance and for others it was having to do something despite its difficulty such as social distancing and wearing a mask.

This past year has highlighted more than ever how one single obstacle can affect us all. Yet that one common obstacle can also have such extreme differences in how it impacts each individual person. That brings me to the next word. A word I feel is even more powerful and requires more character than perseverance.

This word is empathy- the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

As humans being we are all wired to be egotistical, and we want what is best for us and we will naturally attempt to persevere in order get what is best for us. Unfortunately, in doing so we can unintentionally forget about empathy.

Over this past year we have listened to countless stories about difficult situations friends, family or even strangers had to face. Each one of these stories naturally varied in their levels of difficulty and actually a few of them we may have thought to ourselves..... my goodness that person needs to get over this.

It is then we need to ask ourselves. How do we know what led to that difficult moment for that particular person? And maybe, up to this point, that seemingly insignificant problem just might be the hardest situation they needed to overcome.

It is important to recognize we cannot know how a person feels. We need to try and share in the feelings that a given situation is bringing them. Empathy starts with seeing life through someone else's eyes. Nobody has a clear view of reality when it is viewed from our own individual perspective. Seeing things through other eyes doesn't always come easy and often it requires practice and self-reflection. This is empathy.

In displaying empathy, you can potentially change someone's day. You might actually be the one to give them the courage to persevere. Sometimes a little encouragement and kindness is all a person may need and you alone could possess the power to give that to them.

You have all learned an array of topics over these past 13 years that have gotten you to this point. From the alphabet to research papers from addition and subtraction to calculus. Over these years you've been given tools that have prepared you to handle many problems life may throw out at you. But we need to ask ourselves what we can give back to life. The answer to that is empathy and kindness.

On behalf of the Board of Education we congratulate the newest ambassadors of Sayville..... the Class of 2021...

We wish you all the best as you move ahead making your positive impacts on this world.