

2026 Valedictorian/Salutatorian Words of Wisdom

At our annual Valedictorian/Salutatorian Luncheon on Thursday, May 28, we asked our top achievers to give us one piece of advice for incoming freshmen. Here is what they had to say.

- Make real friends. Avoid fake friends.
- Don't use AI. Once you start, it's hard to get out of it.
- Do not take AP Lit! Do make friends.
- Always have a growth mindset - look to improve and always talk positively to yourself.
- Make the most of the opportunities that come your way because you never know what kind of lifelong lessons, hobbies, or friends you'll make along the way. Most of all, just have a good time and pursue what you like doing.
- Do extracurricular competitions. Something I did this year was Science and MESA Fairs (Math, Engineering, Science Achievement) and they were really enjoyable. I learned a lot and got to meet a ton of good people. So the advice I'd give would be to start doing that early.
- Working hard is cool. But in the process, don't lose yourself and don't stop doing the things you love.
- Never give up, no matter how hard it gets.
- High school is such a great opportunity to mess up, don't be a perfectionist! It's much better to challenge yourself and make mistakes than to be perfect at mediocrity.
- It's important to have a work-life balance. Sure, school's important, but it's not always fun. So play games, go out, have fun, and make friends.
- Just do what makes you happy - don't do it for anyone else but yourself.
- Stay a kid at heart as long as you can.
- Take risks and don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone because you never know what any experience could leave you with.
- Definitely try new things, don't be afraid to be a part of new experiences, and do a lot of extracurriculars that you love.
- Try to enjoy the heart of things.
- Dream big and take risks.
- Throughout all of life, there are so many ups and downs - whether they are educational or personal. Never give up. Persevere through the hard times. Always try your best because, in the end, it's going to be worth it.
- Don't let your ice cream melt because you're busy counting someone else's sprinkles.
- Make sure to put in your best effort but don't forget to join activities and have fun.
- Don't let changing times change you.
- Make sure you put yourself out there, but also make sure you don't have too much fun.
- High school goes by fast so take advantage of all the opportunities you have and try new experiences.
- Do everything that you want to do and not what others want you to do.
- Do not be afraid of the future and to make the most of everything.
- Even if school is hard or stressful or just life in general, try your best to listen to yourself and know when you need to take a break - and then just try to live life to the fullest.

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- Go to every school activity you can because they're all fun.
- Do your best, for you, and don't worry about other people's opinions.
- Don't care about what other people think of you because in the end everyone's more worried about themselves You worry about what you're doing.
- Be involved and do as many things as possible because you never know what might be for you.
- Live in the moment because sometimes we all find ourselves worrying about our future and what's going on ahead and we stop living in the moment. So just be present.
- Trust that your work will eventually lead to success and never take small successes for granted.
- Go to all the events because you don't know how much fun it will be.
- Find a teacher who supports you in what you do and befriend them because they will help you achieve more.
- Don't commit to your first idea. Let yourself explore and find what you actually want to do. No matter how much you have on your plate, never stray from having an outlet. You always need something to keep you sane.
- Stress can impact your performance so consistent practice is most important.
- Get involved, try new things, but don't overwork yourself and don't overpromise yourself to do more than you can handle.
- Don't let anyone tell you what you can or can't do. You define your own success, whether that's in a class or a program or anything else.
- Be kind to others. Your first impression of them may not always be correct, and there's a lot more to someone than what you first see.
- Change can be uncomfortable but change is a good thing - don't be afraid.
- No matter how hard things get, keep pushing forward and find the positive in little moments.
- Lean into your fears. You can't have amazing experiences if you don't lean into them.
- Work hard but make sure to have plenty of time for fun and hobbies.
- Know how to utilize AI to the best of your ability.
- Do not let high school just be a place where you go to school - join a club, join a sport - it's a community if you allow it to be.
- Join a club or a sport, you'll meet lots of people and have tons of fun.
- Definitely do your homework because those zeros will stack up.
- Join every club and activity that you can even if it scares you.
- Don't say no to any opportunity. Be curious, be passionate, and don't be afraid to try hard. Really just try everything you want to try even if it seems scary, even if it's out of your comfort zone, even if you don't think you'll fit into it. I promise you'll have the best experiences. Also, be balanced, have fun, and do your homework.
- Remember to prioritize yourself regardless of what other people are pushing you to do. You know yourself and if you know you can't do something, don't push yourself to do it.