

## **Salutatorian Speech - Christopher Harris**

Good morning students, school board members, superintendent and district staff.

First, I would like to thank all of you, from teachers to friends and family, for being in attendance this morning. You have all had a profound impact on the development of the students that will be graduating today, and I feel it is safe to say that I speak on behalf of the whole graduating Class of 2010, in thanking you for all of your efforts that you have invested in us to this day.

When I first sat down to write this speech, tons of thoughts were flowing through my mind. Am I going to reminisce about memories of great importance to me? How about speaking of significant events for the entire school? What is the message I should try to convey? Will I pass out or just be at a loss for words, because to be honest, I did not think I had it in me to do this. But the most important goal I strove for was to create a speech that was truly different. Not that bored people to sleep or followed the traditional “your journey ends here, but a new one

begins” format, but instead offered excitement and new insight into this monumental day. However, it is more so about your accomplishments and the best way for me to craft inspiration and motivation in you all.

Today is no small feat. It perhaps is the most significant and life altering achievement most of you can claim to this day. Never hesitate to recognize how proud each and every person here today is for you to complete such a long and difficult task. Having worked for over thirteen years just for this moment, it is hard to ignore the determination, perseverance, patience, hard-work and even sacrifice that embodies itself the attitudes of every graduate. The innumerable amount of opportunities your diploma enables you to attain is without doubt, and I encourage all of you to pursue what is most dear to you. Pursue that in which you feel you can make a difference.

Looking at you, the Class of 2010, I realize that after today, I may no longer see many of you. That is a painful thought. On the other hand, I am also filled with anticipation, because I have no doubt in my mind that every single one of you sitting before me has the potential to succeed and make a difference in life. Of

course, not every one of us can be rich, famous, and powerful, but often times it is the people who just offer words of advice and encouragement that make the world a better place. It is human nature to reflect the mood of others in your own actions, so positive words and actions could have an overwhelming impact on the moods and quality of life of others. Remaining positive, even in the harshest of circumstances, places individuals in a much better position to reverse their luck. If the accomplishments of our class, including the first class to graduate from the new school after attending all four years, the largest number of graduates, earning the first team state title in history (thanks to the boys' weightlifting team), a national title for the Showdolls, state qualifications in boys' cross country and track, as well as, countless successes on the part of individuals, are any indicator of what we will accomplish in our futures. The future looks bright.

Throughout my years in high school, not only have I gained knowledge of the subjects I have studied, but I have learned many other lessons as well. At times I know some of you questioned the need to attend class, but gaining intelligence is

not the only purpose of it. School has helped to build priceless social skills, as well as, instilled a value to succeed. I don't know about you, but when I see others performing well, I take it as a challenge to try my best as well. Having the correct mindset makes all of the difference. If you believe you can achieve anything, and don't allow others to tell you differently, what you are capable of achieving is genuinely amazing.

I would like to conclude my speech with a quote from Robert Frost. "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." I encourage you, the Class of 2010, to not only follow the opportunities available to you, but to follow your heart and pursue a cause of particular importance to you. Instead of following the path of past generations and graduating classes, I challenge you all to make your own path. The risks are always present, but the battle always makes the win so much sweeter. For me, it is neither about the money nor the notoriety of a position, but instead whether I can make a difference and love what I do.

Thanks again to all the families, friends, teachers, and any others I have missed, for your contributions. They are greatly appreciated.

Congratulations again, Class of 2010, and I wish you all the best of luck. I know you'll do your best. I'll miss you all.

Thank you!