

## Valedictorian and Salutatorian Words of Wisdom

We gathered our 2019 valedictorians and salutatorians for a celebratory lunch on Friday, May 24, and one of the things we asked them to do was provide their words of wisdom for incoming freshman. Here's what they had to say:

- There are 86400 seconds in a day. If you had that much money and someone took \$10 from you, would you throw away the rest to go after it? It's the same with your time. If someone does something that upsets you, don't let it take up too much of your time - just let it go.
- Branch out, get out of your comfort zone, try things you've never done before.
- Don't worry about what people say or if people say something mean that hurts you, just leave it alone. Who cares what they think? Don't focus on the negativity, focus on you. The best thing is finding out what you like to do.
- Take high school seriously, but at the same time enjoy it - it goes by fast.
- Don't procrastinate.
- Volunteer a lot - that's how I made a lot of friends outside of school. Build relationships - they're important.
- Get out of your comfort zone and try things you haven't tried before. You are more likely to find people you want to spend time with that way.
- Look for friends in everyone you meet, stay open to meeting people, and have a strong core of people who will support and challenge you. Build strong social courage - when you see something that's not right, stand up for your fellow high schooler!
- Be kind to yourself. Don't get down on yourself for grades that aren't perfect. Celebrate small victories. Don't be afraid to have fun. We tend to look to our futures so much, we forget to enjoy the time we have now. Life is meant for you to be happy. Find that. Enjoy the time while you can.
- Be ready to accept that mistakes will happen and bad things will come up - bad tests, broken friendships, missed opportunities. Don't let those things destroy you. There is more to you and your life than your mistakes.
- Don't treat high school as something you have to do, but what you get to do. Otherwise, you'll find that you look back and wish you had slowed down and enjoyed yourself.
- Don't be afraid to cut ties. If there are negative influences in your life, is it worth it to keep them around? Consider who is in your life. Find a core group who will support you and lift you up.
- Work smarter, not harder.
- Find your own self-motivation. Establish grit, courage, and motivation.
- Past midnight is a bad time to start work that's due tomorrow.
- Be different - don't follow what everyone else is doing.
- If you need help, ask for it. There are people who want to help you and see you succeed.
- Never give up. Hard times come to all of us, but they're small in the grand scheme of things.
- Work hard, play hard.
- Don't stop believing.
- The work you put in determines what you get out.
- I wish I had taken more time for myself and not been so busy.
- Get involved in sports and extracurriculars.
- Make as many memories with friends as possible - your paths may never cross again.

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- Classes - take the ones you want, not just the ones your friends are in. Do what you love and you'll get most out of it.
- Don't forget to love yourself and appreciate the little things.
- Don't give up when you make a mistake - that's how you learn.
- Value the relationships you make with teachers and other staff members.
- Be a kind person. I'm more proud of who I've become than my grades.
- Get involved in extracurriculars - meet new people, create strong relationships.
- Opportunity cost - everything you do costs what you could have done in that time. If I was to go talk to freshmen, I would tell them that for those of you with a passion - the opportunity cost of reaching for valedictorian status may be too much. I want to be a musician. There are so many opportunities I've been given through high school and so many I've had to sacrifice to get here. I do my best not to have regrets. Don't check out of school, but don't feel like you have to make it the only thing you're doing. Follow your passion.
- There are a lot of different ways to be successful, not just one path. Look for something where you can find success and that brings you joy.
- Sometimes things feel bad in the moment, but step back and don't take yourself too seriously. Take the bad with the good.
- Get involved - it will make high school more enjoyable and you'll make a lot more friends.
- Don't hesitate to ignore what you're *told* you can do and focus on what you *know* you can do
- Take all the classes you'd like to take - this is the last time education is free, so do what you can with the time you have.
- Take classes that sound fun - there's nothing wrong with being a jack-of-all-trades.
- If you get into a rough spot, focus on what it will take to succeed.
- Don't be afraid of failure - sometimes you have to go one rung down on the ladder to go two rungs up. There's less of a straight road - there will be obstacles. When you have failure, learn and grow from it and use it to fuel success in the future.
- Take challenging classes in high school so you're not just coasting through four years.
- Find your own path. There's nothing wrong with failing. The more you commit yourself, the more you'll get out of it. Branch out, find out what you enjoy.
- Stay motivated.
- Value friendships. I will remember who I surrounded myself with.
- Don't get blinded by what you have to do and forget what you can do. Enjoy life while you're young, it's ok to do stuff.
- Be yourself. Be proud of who you are, and happy with who you are. Live with no regrets, and remember there's always room for kindness.