

## Graduation

Remarks by Principal Swanson

June 1, 2019

Good morning and welcome to commencement exercises. Accompanied by the high school band under the direction of Brian Cincotta, please welcome the Hingham High School Class of 2019...

Please stand for the National Anthem which will be sung by the senior members of the Hingham High School chorus...

Good morning and welcome to all of you. My name is Rick Swanson and I am the principal here at Hingham High School. It is a pleasure to welcome all of you – parents, other family members, friends, teachers, and most of all, our graduates – to the commencement exercises for the Hingham High School Class of 2019. I am joined here on the field by a host of dignitaries, who represent both the school administration and our local government. I'm especially pleased to welcome several members of our school committee, including: the chair, Michelle Ayer; Vice Chair, Carlos Da

Silva, Nes Correnti, Libby Lewiecki, Kerri Ni, and Liza O'Reilly. We're also joined today by our State Representative, the Honorable Joan Meschino; from our Board of Selectmen, Mary Power; our Assistant Superintendent Jamie LaBillois; Business Director, John Ferris; Director of Student Services, Suzanne Vinnes; assistant principals Jennifer Henriksen and Collin Shattuck; and more than thirty members of our faculty. Among those assembled here behind the podium, the true guest of honor is our Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Dorothy Galo, presiding today at her final graduation as the leader of our school district. Dr. Galo has served Hingham schools with excellence and unsurpassed dedication for 56 years, the last 18 of them as superintendent. In the case of Dr. Galo, words like "excellence" and "unsurpassed dedication" do not represent hyperbole; they represent the *truth*. This morning, as our seniors receive their diplomas and greet our superintendent here on the field, 56 of them will deliver a rose. 18 of those roses will be white, symbolizing her years as superintendent. The rest will be a bright crimson, the color of our school, the same school Dr. Galo attended herself as a member of the Class of 1957. Today, more than six decades later, she has made an indelible mark on our school system and on the life of this community. All of us owe her

an enormous debt of gratitude. Dr. Galo, on behalf of everyone gathered here today: Thank you!

While today's graduation marks a watershed moment in the history of our school district, it of course also represents a major milestone in the lives of the young women and men seated before us. All 278 of them. Individually, members of the Hingham High School Class of 2019 can take enormous pride in their accomplishments thus far. And collectively, this class has set a standard for unity, spirit, hard work, service, and concern for others. As much as any class in recent memory, the Class of 2019 has advanced the mission of our school and embodied its highest values. I've heard it again and again from teachers in the past few weeks: "I'm really going to miss this class. They were special." Seniors: We liked you so much we even canceled your final exams. What other class can say that? You've won our affection and earned our respect from your first day of classes until your last. Even though that finish line was moved forward a bit by the surprise events of two weeks ago. The fire presented a few challenges but it could hardly derail a triumphant conclusion to your four years at Hingham High School.

Sitting in my office a few days ago, thinking about what I wanted to say to you this morning, my eyes were drawn to a quotation that I keep on the wall right above my desk. It's a famous line from the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, and it says: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." And although we were greatly inconvenienced by the *particular* fire that smoldered in Room 283 a couple of weeks ago, the quote got me thinking about how well the image of fire might fit this occasion; how well it might capture the spirit of this graduating class. Not the kind of fire that leaves smoke and water damage, forcing the closure of classrooms, but the kind of fire Yeats had in mind:

- A fire in the belly, a thirst for knowledge and self-improvement, the kind of drive that will send about 90 percent of our seniors off to four-year colleges and many more on to two-year colleges and trade schools.
- A competitive fire that has yielded academic honors for AP Scholars and National Merit semi-finalists; regional and state awards for our musicians, actors and artists; accolades for many teams, from DECA and robotics to mock trial and debate; and so many league

championships, sectional titles and state championships for our student athletes.

- And for Hingham High students, it's not just about competition. A similar kind of fire reveals itself in the desire to serve others. Whether doing volunteer work during school-sponsored service trips, raising money for various causes, or raising awareness about social problems, members of this class have looked outward and found ways to make a positive difference in the world around them.
- With regard to service, there are countless examples, but none more powerful than those students who have elected to serve our country in the military. Among those, two have received appointments to United States military academies. I'd like them both to stand as I call their names as outstanding examples of that call to service. First, with an appointment to the US Coast Guard Academy: Elise Birkhaeuser. And with an appointment to the US Naval Academy: Reed Schilb...

[Applause]

Their willingness to serve and to sacrifice self-interest should be a model for all of us.

And now, just a few final thoughts on fire, and how we can reclaim it as something good.

- In literature, fire often symbolizes inspiration, and that's what you'll find inside the walls of our school. Seniors: Think of yourselves in the chemistry lab during an experiment; at the pottery wheel during a ceramics class; in the band room during an evening rehearsal; in an English classroom during a Student Led Discussion; inhaling the pine-scented aroma of the woodshop, using your hands, together with your imagination, to create something new. Recall the spark of inspiration that helped you understand something for the first time or gain an original insight. Remember how it felt the moment when you caught a brief glimpse of the person you might become.
- Fire, of course, generates warmth, and that's just what you've brought to one another in times of joy (the homecoming celebrations, the field days, the proms) but also in times of grief; together, you have mourned the loss of a classmate and friend; and through those moments of sorrow, you've been sustained by the warmth of a genuine community.

- Finally, when part of a torch, fire can symbolize hope and a striving for the future. What better symbol for this occasion?
- Class of 2019: As you gather this one last time, surrounded by those who love you, keep striving toward that bright future with hope; maintain a steady sense of purpose; move beyond the sturdy foundation you've built here, in a place you can always call home; and keep the fire burning.

And now the chair of our school committee, Michelle Ayer...

To deliver the address of the salutatorian, Jessica Carr...

Please welcome the class valedictorian, Anna Calame...

And next, a student speaker, chosen by a vote of teachers, administrators, and fellow students, James Winikoff...

Our final speaker this morning is the president of the Class of 2019, Billy Johnston...

Dr. Galo, it gives me great pleasure to certify to you that all those receiving diplomas today have met all the requirements for graduation as established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Hingham School Committee. Graduates, please come forward to receive your diplomas.