**Old Bridge High School**

 **‘Senior’ Class of 2019**

 **Rich Masarik Vice-Principal**

 **PNC Arts Center, June 24, 2019**

**Rich,..this is a very big day for these kids and their families. Many have spoken before you, and the crowd may already be restless. So, stand and wait a moment for them to look in your direction, and see it is you, who is about to speak. They know you, you are their class V.P. You don’t want to drone on, as they have places to go and things to do. But you do have a message, and you will deliver it with focus and clarity. Listen to those who have gone before, and if there is an echo, or slight delay in the microphone to the speakers, then adjust as necessary. Do not tap the microphone and say “testing-testing’. Do not shout, as that will only increase any restlessness. Speak calmly, but with conviction. You’ll do fine, get in, get out.**

Good afternoon everyone, welcome, WELCOME! WOW, YOU did it, YOU **made it!**  I want to express our appreciation to everyone in this large and enthusiastic audience for joining us here at the PNC Arts Center. That includes all of the parents of our graduates, the grandparents, siblings, friends, clergy, employers, and others, who all share in this celebration for the Old Bridge High School, **CLASS OF 2019.** While these kids did the work, you were the support system off campus. You encouraged them, gave them rides, gave them instructions, and in most instances, and if I remember my own high school years, you gave them money, **(laughter).**

I also want to acknowledge everyone at Old Bridge High School, for it is their effort, their dedication, their commitment, and their loyalty to our community, that provided the experience, guidance, and education that these students have received at Old Bridge. And I mean everyone; teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, drivers, food servers, security, maintenance, and others. None of this is possible without all these folk’s hard work.

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And to Principal Sasso, along with my co-vice principals Fazio and Oliveri, I am appreciative of all your assistance and support.

This is and has been a long day. I have been very impressed with those who have already spoken to you. Their messages have been genuine and very well conveyed. I do not plan on keeping you here for more than is necessary, but I too have a message, and a message I hope you’ll take with you today, and into the future. AND THAT MESSAGE IS: YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU SET YOUR MIND TO, ANYTHING.

Many of you already know where you’re going, but many are still in the decision process. Either way, think big, think outside of the box, reach for the stars, because the stars are within reach. Do not focus on just the destination, focus on both the result as well as the journey. The Journey itself can be a huge pleasure, a huge reward. Do not limit your potential. The world does not end at the state line. The world does not end at the Jersey shore, the Atlantic Ocean, or even the Pacific Ocean. There are resources, there is advice, there are apprenticeships, there are scholarships, there are loans; what I am saying is THERE are ways to reach your goal, your dreams. There is an old saying by an unknown author, and it is as relevant today as when he or she first said it. It goes like this***: “Find your passion, find something you love to do every day, then get paid to do it”.***  That is what success is, that is what brings happiness, that is what makes your life fulfilled.

You can be anything: pilot, teacher, fashion designer, engineer, police officer, soldier, sailor, brick layer, plumber, counselor,……….hotel manager, language translator, health care provider, the list is endless. Never be afraid to try, never be afraid to ask, never be afraid to go and do, because you **can** **DO.**

We here at Old Bridge are the **Knights**. Let me give you a quote about that, one you can take with you, one you can be proud of, and one for you to always remember: ***“A Knight is strength through presence, and when called upon, victory through courage”.*** I have come to see that in every

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single one of you. From the classrooms, to the offices, to our City Dinner Cruise, and even our journey to Orlando. You all have it in you. You all have the ability to accomplish what ever you set your mind, and will, to do.

There is one more piece to this puzzle of life, that I am going to share here today. And that is not only your destination, but your conduct along the way. Live life as if you were the hero in your own movie,…..but be a hero of goodness along with strength. Be a hero who comforts not suppresses. Be a hero to be envied, not feared. Your accomplishments can and should be done the right way. It takes years to build a good reputation, but only seconds to ruin it. And that starts with good decisions and the right choices. You should be honest, dependable, display integrity, and be guided by a meaningful moral compass. You must treat everyone equally, and with courtesy, until they prove otherwise. Your handshake, your word, they must be your bond. You must help those less fortunate, and offer a helping hand up when appropriate. Always, and I mean always, have your friend’s **backs**, be on their **SIX**es. And of the utmost importance is family, family is everything. Treat your family with respect. Protect your family from anything,…**ANYTHING**. Treat your future spouse or partner with courtesy and fairness. Treat your own children with love and care. Teach them to abide by the rules and set an example for them through your own actions.

 If you save and file one thing today, set **this** in stone: In the years to come**,** your **legacy** won’t be **what** you have earned, but **who** you were along that journey.

And if this hasn’t already been coined, then it will be now:

 **‘DO THE RIGHT THING, DO THE KNIGHT THING’**

 **PAUSE, BE SILENT FOR A MOMENT RICH**

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 **OK**, are you **ready** for the gate to **open**? Are you **ready** for the **whistle** to **blow**? Are you **ready** for the green flag to go **UP**? **I** think you are, and I think **you know you are**.

Now, there is a lot happening today and tonight. So be careful, make **GOOD** **choices**, **drive** carefully, travel **safely**,

 and until we meet again: **Goodbye**.