

Valedictorian Speech 2017

Good morning Faculty, Family and graduates. I'm thrilled to welcome you to the 54th commencement ceremony of Ernest Manning High School. Today we walk across the stage and receive our diplomas, an acknowledgement of our years of dedication and achievement. Just think about the distances we have covered both individually and collectively.

At this point in life, it is easy to be confused about where to go from here. We need to be constantly working at things that we love and be ready to seize unexpected opportunities. Life is a process of prioritizing. If we stay focused on the things we are most passionate about, our true pathways will become clear to us. Some of discovered what we are interested in through learning done in the classroom, while others look up to our family as role models and are inspired to follow in their footsteps. Who helped us develop this clarity? To answer that question look around this auditorium. Family, teachers, and friends are the people who we must appreciate most for guiding us and giving us an opportunity to explore our interests throughout the past three years.

To all the parents and guardians in attendance, without your guidance - we would not be wearing these fancy graduation caps right now! Without your advice - we wouldn't be walking across this stage. On behalf of the graduates here, we appreciate how you inspire us and believe in us and we thank you for your love and support.

Many life lessons have also been taught to us by our teachers, who not only helped us to discover who we are in the classroom, but also who we are in the world! We might credit our graduation to our own motivation alone, but, the collective, in reality, is responsible for shaping how we developed into the people we are today.

Our time spent together has led to the formation of unbreakable bonds with our classmates. Our friends have allowed us to feel supported, and pushed us to be our best.

Graduates We are going to build great lives with a great network that started here. It will be one of life's greatest transitions to walk out of the doors of Ernest Manning for the final time as students.

Although we'll look back at high school and remember all that happened to us, we can't start the next chapter of our lives if we keep re-reading the last one. We are nowhere near complete as people until we experience independence and freedom of choice. They say that an individual will meet 10,000 people in his or her lifetime. The thing that we want to remember is that some of the best people we have met are from this our graduating class.

How you see yourself and the world around you begins in your own mind. Some people say that you cannot have unlimited success. They have the view that success is only for the privileged few that are destined by fate to have it. We all have 24 hours in the day. The same number of hours that Bill Gates has, Mark

Zuckerberg, Einstein had so we all have opportunities to define ourselves. Even if we are at an impasse in our lives and think that there is no way to achieve our goals, we need to persevere. Steve Jobs once wisely said, "I am convinced that half of what separates the successful from the non successful is perseverance". We cannot choose the easier option in life with the lesser challenge simply because the likelihood that we will succeed is greater! We have to be willing to sacrifice time to ensure that we succeed through hard work.

With 12 years of grade school checked off the list, we still have to remember that most of our life lies ahead of us. We all have our own personalized definitions of what it means to be great, whether it's being respected in a career, helping others, or simply finding happiness, however we define it. I ask that you follow your dreams and do what makes you happy. The fact that we've made it here to this ceremony is just a testament to our perseverance and our commitment to excellence.

The next phase of life is **STARTING NOW** and we are joining all of the other grade 12 students from around the world. In the case of Canadian education, it clearly sets us apart from many other countries in the world. Let's demonstrate to the world the power of this education. Graduates you are destined for greatness!!
Congratulations Class of 2017!

Parents, Family Members, Fellow Teachers and Graduates

My name is Andy Johnson and I am here to offer a toast to the Graduates of 2017 on behalf of the teachers.

As a teacher of grade 12 students and a parent of two graduates from Ernest Manning, I really appreciate seeing so many students succeed and move into this next phase of their lives. I am very proud of the students and our effort to support their interests and abilities.

Furthermore as a teacher of the Architecture and Design program, I regularly see grade 12 students who show tremendous passion, initiative and enthusiasm.

Students that have taken Design or Architecture class know about the 'design process.' In our school library we have on display many amazing and award winning home designs; Each student creating a unique interpretation of a single design brief. The design brief lays out the design challenge, requiring from each individual a personal response yet within the design there are constraints like maximum square footage and specifications for what are considered desirable features in a home.

Psychologists say that **analogy** is the only language understood by the subconscious, so I have created for our graduates, a design brief for creating an **Awesome Life .'**

Design Brief : To Design an **Amazing Life**

Design Statement: Given a set of opportunities, abilities and interests your task is to design a full and rewarding life complete with the following constraints and specifications.

Constraints:

- The design of your life should be filled with personal freedom, mutual responsibility and happiness unencumbered by artificial **props and escapes**. (**your parents can explain what these might be**)
- The design of your life would be one constructed and developed by **you**- using your personal decision making, effort, and labour.

Specifications:

- Design into your Life an amazingly large **Great Room** filled with strong diverse **attachments to other people**, friends and family to form **enduring social connections** no matter the stormy conditions you will face.
- The **windows** of your life need to look out upon your **personal dreams and goals**– Attainable **dreams and goals** that let you see yourself in the future while providing places to rest along the way (so you can look back seeing **who you are** and **where you come from**).
- Design your life to include large and generous libraries and laboratories for **learning** and study to support your curious mind with understanding that will lead to rewarding careers and meaningful work.
- Design varied structures to support your life so you remain **resilient and flexible** -able to take advantage of opportunities and resolve challenges that come your way.
- The power grid for your life would be renewable, based on **courage** for the future rather than apathy or fear.
- Provide for natural spaces, Fitness and Yoga Spaces to support the **health and wellness of your body , mind and soul** – your body appreciated and respected by your mind and soul –and your mind and soul providing support for your body (un-infected by media or stereotypes).
- The life you design and create will be **continuously informed** by **real people and real experiences**.

Assessment and Deliverables:

- Regular **critical self-review** –take walks in the park, reflect and gain insight on your progress.
- Regular research and consultation with others, mentors friends and family so you **stay connected**
- Occasional **renovations** as required to keep your life moving forward.
- Expect many **stages of construction**, re-construction and review as your life's goals will change.
- **Engagement and Authentic Connections** with others are **Celebrated as we do tonight!**

- **Do Overs Allowed!!**

Please raise your glasses to the Graduates of 2017