

Shrewsbury High School
Graduation Remarks
June 1, 2017

Members of the School Committee; administrators, faculty, and staff; parents, family, and guests; and, most importantly, members of the Class of 2017 – it is an honor and a privilege to address you this evening.

It is inspirational to me to look out at you and consider both how much you've accomplished and how much potential you have to live interesting, meaningful lives in the decades ahead. As I'm sure is already happening now, and will more so at upcoming graduation parties, you will be asked lots of questions about your future. *What* are you doing next year? *Where* are you going to school, and *when* do you leave? Do you know *what* you plan to major in? *Where* do you want to travel or live? *What* do you want to be *when* you "grow up?"

However, there are other interrogatives that you are likely to hear less frequently, but I think are more important; namely the queries "How?" and "Why?" Heather E. McGowan, an author who focuses on the future of education and work, suggests that in a rapidly changing future, for many of you it is difficult to know *what* you might be doing for work, as many jobs will become obsolete, others will evolve, and many haven't yet been invented. Because of this, she says we shouldn't be asking "*What* do you want to be when you grow up?" but rather "*How* do you want to be when you grow up?"

Despite uncertainty about the *what*, you do have control over *how* you will be in the future. *How* represents the choices you make regarding the ways in which you act. Thanks to the values you have learned from your families and from your education in Shrewsbury, I hope that you make...

- the choice to be ethical;
- the choice to be kind;
- the choice to be respectful;
- the choice to be charitable;
- the choice to be empathetic;
- the choice to be industrious;
- the choice to be grateful;
- the choice to be humble;
- the choice to be purposeful; and
- the choice to be loving.

While not always easy, these choices are yours to make, and no matter how the future evolves these aspirational characteristics, this “human touch,” will never become obsolete. No matter what you do, if you do it in these ways, your lives will make a positive difference for others and will be satisfying for yourselves.

The more difficult question than “How?”, I think, is “Why?” This is a question I encourage you to embrace as you enter what can be an exciting, but also unnerving, phase of your lives. Of course, as adolescents you have asked your parents “Why?” many times, and I’m sure, like I often do at home, your parents have answered this query with a bit of deep wisdom handed down, generation to generation, through the ages: “Because I said so.” (You may laugh, but I promise most of you will utter that phrase someday to your own children...).

Figuring out your *why* is a crucial part of your transition into adulthood. The author Simon Senek defines *why* as one’s personal purpose, cause, or belief; it is what gets you out of bed in the morning and motivates you to navigate your life in the direction you’ve determined. He writes: “Most of us live our lives by accident – we live as it happens. Fulfillment comes when we live our lives on purpose.”

It is my hope that what you’ve learned during your time in school has been an important foundation for the development of your sense of purpose, and I challenge you to build upon this in the coming years so that you can clearly articulate your own *why*. Senek says that the values that express our *why* should be verbs, as our actions ultimately demonstrate our values. Each day for the past four years you have passed under the banner in the SHS lobby with the school’s mission statement emblazoned across it. My wish for you is that you convert that mission into verbs that will help you find your purpose. Challenge yourself to improve; create ideas, and solutions, and art, and music; think independently; keep learning in order to build your capabilities; care for others and yourselves; and contribute your talent and time to others in order to make a difference. Live lives *of* purpose, *on* purpose.

On behalf of everyone in the Shrewsbury Public Schools, please accept my very best wishes and hopes that you choose to lead purposeful, fulfilling lives. Congratulations.