

Good evening and welcome to the Webb Bridge Middle School 8th grade celebration ceremony! I am Rebecca Williams Perkins, the proud principal of WBMS and we are going to have a wonderful evening.

Welcome and thank you to the extended family members and friends who are present. Please stand and so we can recognize you. You all have loved and supported these wonderful students for years!

Welcome and thank you to the many WBMS staff members who have joined us tonight. Please stand so we can recognize you. You all have worked tirelessly to engage and educate these young minds.

Welcome and thank you to the parents and guardians who have molded these individuals for over a decade and have partnered with us to build strong character and work ethic in these students. Please stand so we can recognize you!

And a very special welcome to the Class of 2022. In just one year you all have stolen a bit of my heart. You have made me laugh and beam with pride and sometimes shake my head. Members of this class asked and

organized the first pep rally the school has ever had; you had great success in football, soccer, and other sports; you all took honors in band, orchestra, and chorus, took numerous advanced level courses, and collected cans, pennies, and school supplies for those in need. You my friends, exemplified the Webb Way and made a positive impact at WBMS. You all have worked hard and grown tremendously as people and scholars since entering the halls of Webb Bridge Middle School.

And tonight we have *all* come together to celebrate you! Stand class of 2022 and be officially recognized!

I have a few people on stage with me tonight who I want to introduce:

Ms. Mathewson – 6th grade counselor

Ms. Nuckolls – 7th grade counselor

Ms. Ramsey – 8th grade counselor

Ms. Erdman – Daughters of the American Revolution representative

Ms. Bishop - Daughters of the American Revolution representative

Ms. Fiorentino – 8th grade level chair (A special thanks to her, Ms. Consola, and Ms. Seletsky for organizing this event)

Ms. Garner – 6th grade administrator

Ms. Hurst – 7th grade administrator

Mr. Milak – 8th grade administrator

We are so please you have ALL joined us this evening to honor the end of middle school and the start of something new!

Beginning anything new brings both excitement and worry. For some of you the exhilaration far outweighs the fear. But as the summer months dwindle, the unknown may begin to breed an increase in anxiety. And that, my friends, is normal.

Joining you all this year offered many new experiences for me – And I had my fair share of anxiety. Even though, like you, I have been in schools for a long time – changing schools is just that – a change. When I arrived at WBMS, people spoke about topics I knew nothing about like

– Desktop stores and Geobots. And even parts of the school day I was very familiar with – looked and ran differently. Lunch room procedures, class changes, and dismissal – soon you will see what I mean. These events look different in high school.

There is a lot to learn when we begin something new. You all know what I mean. Remember just a few years ago when you came to middle school and you were worried about finding your classes? About changing clothes for PE? About attending your first dance? About remembering your locker combination and opening your locker? But you figured it all out, right?

Personal growth begins when we step out of our comfort zone and enter the world of new. But I think there is more to it than that. We can enter new and be successful or we can enter new and allow fear to consume us. After my own experiences and years of watching students enter the world of high school, I have found there are a few steps to ensure achievement in a world of new:

1. Begin each day with the right attitude

Our brain is the MOST powerful part of our being. That is not my opinion; there is scientific research to support it. Therefore, how we mentally approach each day, each class, each decision truly makes a difference. When we tell ourselves we can achieve if we keep trying, we are more likely to do so; When we tell ourselves it is going to be a good day no matter how many bumps we face along the way, we are more likely to fulfill that goal. Even the simple act of smiling can change not only our mood but the entire atmosphere around us. I remember standing in the cafeteria at the beginning of the year, and Jarren approached me and asked me why I was always so happy, and I told him that I have much to be grateful for. That does not mean I have not suffered pain and loss, but each day I choose to adopt a positive outlook and the results of that daily decision have helped me through some pretty rough times of change and kept me focused on achieving my goals.

Similarly, I remember asking my friend Thomas who was the valedictorian of my high school graduating class, how he did it – because Thomas was not just the student who made all As, he was also an award-winning trombone player and track star. The boy could do anything! He told me his secret – Each day as he entered school and then as he walked into each class, he told himself – *I'm lucky to be here. Today I will learn exciting, new information. I can't wait.* Thomas knew the power of a positive mindset. He knew that people who focus on opportunities not challenges are happier and more successful – in school as well as life.

Our inner voice that guides our mindset is powerful, so be aware of the messages it is sending and take control when the voice of fear and doubt seeps in. When you hit a difficult subject in school or situation, don't shut down, stress out, or tell yourself you cannot do it; remind yourself that you are capable. You may have to work at it, but you can achieve just about anything with the right mindset.

2. Be fully present

Having an optimistic outlook will not work if you are not fully present in your own high school experience. Do not be a bystander during the next four years. You must be all in – that means you will not drag yourself into AHS in August, you will stand up tall and walk in with confidence; you will not select a seat in the back and hide, you will sit up front and lean in; you will not shut down when you do not know something, you will find someone who knows and you will ask for what you need; you will not stand by when someone is being unkind, you will stand up for what is right; you will not expect your teachers to know when you are confused, you will raise your hand high and seek support; you will not focus on being judged, you will focus on learning; you will not wait for someone to ask you to join in, you will find a sport, club, or organization that sounds interesting, and you will sign up. And if there is not a club or an organization that interests you, you will create it. Being fully present means taking an active role in your own life, and

while this piece of advice is important all the time, it is especially necessary when we start something new.

So, moving into high school, I hope you will adopt a positive mindset and be present, but there is one last piece -

3. Reflect on your wins and defeats and make adjustments

Often we are so busy, we do not take the time to process our triumphs and areas of growth. This last piece is key and so hard to do when we are in the midst of something new, but trust me, a few minutes each night will make all the difference. Remembering small wins even on a challenging day helps us stay focused on achieving our goals and being honest with ourselves and taking ownership of places where we need to grow is the only way we can make the desired tweaks to improve.

There is a sign over my desk – Do not be afraid of change. Be afraid of not changing. We are all faced with change throughout our lives. You all about to embark on a super cool change – entering high school. It's going to be awesome, Class of 2022! This room is filled with people

who are here to support you on this new journey to AHS, but so much depends on you. Go forward with a confident mind. Everything you need to be successful in high school is within you. Be fully present during the next four years. Take control of your high school experience, and make it what you want it to be. Celebrate your own success along the way, and don't stress about making mistakes because you will make some and it will be okay. Just smile and bring your best self every day. I wish you all the best!