

Valedictory Address  
Jessica Anne Bunting  
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It is an honor and privilege to be speaking to all of you today, representing the Class of 2013. Thank you to all of the administrators who ensured our success, the teachers who taught us invaluable life lessons, for which they do not receive enough credit, and the parents who made us who we are. We would not be where we are today without your support. I would personally like to thank my parents. I know that they are very proud of me today, but I may be even more proud of them for doing everything possible for me. I would like to thank God for guiding me to this point.

Class of 2013, look at us. We have survived the past few years. Whether time flew or inched for you, much has happened to us. I know I don't need to detail the "scared freshman to functioning members of society" thing, because I'm pretty sure that feeling isn't limited to just our graduating year, or to Kempsville. What really matters is what was accomplished. Among us sit state champions. Multiple sports teams that placed at districts, regionals, states, and even attended nationals are wearing Class of 2013 tassels and Kempsville colors. Gifted artists and performers are on their way to being exhibited at venues much larger than 5194 Chief Trail. Many Chiefs have committed to colleges, practical schools, careers, and branches of the military that make our community proud. Each graduate has contributed something to this very successful group.

Looks like this is the part where I divulge words of wisdom to the graduating class. I am sorry to say that I don't really have any message of absolute truth or generalizations concerning our futures. If you know me well, you are aware that I apologize. A lot. I just did it in that last sentence. I'll get it all out of my system now: I'm sorry for being so nervous, for not being more humble, and for not appreciating those around me. I'm sorry for complaining... that's the only one my parents heard. I'm sorry for not getting to know every one of the 383 members of the class of 2013. A wise person in my life told me to stop apologizing and until now I didn't listen. Now, I don't want to be sorry for many of the things I once viewed as mistakes. Now that our childhood is passing, and we will soon be graduates, what we did in high school doesn't affect us as much as it did just last week. As long as we don't let our past actions dictate our future, then what we perceive as mistakes or failures are just blocks that built our character. In other words, I am not sorry for the things that made me who I have become.

The reason for this message, at this time, is this: The graduates of the Class of 2013 are about to be bombarded by an array of choices. We will decide what jobs to apply to, what to major in if we pursue further learning, and where to settle down. Those

choices are ours alone, and we should not apologize for them so long as those around us were not harmed in the process. The paths we chose in high school were varied, but all led to our walking across this stage today. Our options are limitless, as are our outcomes. Teachers and parents have given us the tools to succeed, and now each of us has the opportunity to form our own definition of success. Please be proud of who you are in each present moment, as it is a collage of all of your experiences, both the good and the bad.

Though where we are in each present moment is what's important, we shouldn't forget what we did in high school and what we learned. As I noted, we have thrived in many aspects of life already. We have met and gone beyond requirements, we have created bonds with those around us, and today we will be ready to go off into the world. Just kidding, I still want Mommy to take care of me— she makes great cookies. We have become individuals, and from this point forward we are hiking on unpaved trails. Don't apologize for wrong turns, because we aren't lost we're on an adventure. Let's graduate Class of 2013!