

Dear Senior of the Class of 2026—

If you would like to speak at graduation, you are invited to submit a copy of your speech on or before May 1st to Mrs. Hess and/or Mrs. Neal. If you have any questions, you may ask Mrs. Hess or Mrs. Neal.

Below are a few tips that will help make your speech memorable. Follow the guidelines listed and be sure you address the rubric when you audition. Good luck.

***Tell lots of stories.** The stories should be about the students in the graduating class, the teachers, and other important people in the school. The stories can be funny or touching or just descriptive.

The audience is filled with parents and people who are not part of the graduating class, so what you want to do is make that graduating class come alive for the people who aren't a part of it.

***Talk about major events.** What are some important things that happened in the world, your community, or at your school in the last four years? Include them in your speech, especially if these events evoke emotion. If a teacher or student died, mention them and say how much everyone misses them. If your baseball team won the state championship, mention this (and expect enthusiastic applause from the audience).

***Talk about meaningful activities your class did together.** Here's where you talk about the prom, Spirit Week, a successful charity event, the awesome school play, etc. If your school has some traditional events, mention them. Some of the audience members will be alumni and will appreciate this.

***Talk about values that are important to the students and the audience.** Talk about the value of a Buchanan High School education. Don't dwell on the topic too long, you risk sounding corny, but mentioning them will make your speech feel more inclusive to everyone.

***Be inclusive.** Talk about everyone in the class: the jocks, the band geeks, the Honor Society kids, and everyone else. This speech is for everybody.

***Use popular culture references.** This is a popular culture era, so including popular culture references are another thing you can do to make your speech more personal. Work in references to popular TV shows, movies, and songs. Just don't mention that Green Day song (see below).

***Don't talk about yourself.** Well, you can talk about yourself a little bit, but only a little. This speech is for everyone, and it isn't very classy to steal the focus.

***Don't speak badly of anyone.** This is not the time to make fun of that nasty English teacher,

nor is it time to get even with that kid who bullied you from grades 3 through 10. Be nice. You can gently poke fun of quirky things, like that weird green stuff they serve every Thursday at the school cafeteria, or the fact that you were the first class to get Palm Pilots or whatever and no one knows what happened to them. But do this sparingly, and be careful not to offend anyone.

***Be appropriate.** Use common sense. This is not the forum to discuss the antics of your classmates or other indiscretions. Don't swear. Know your audience.

***Use inside jokes sparingly.** Your classmates might appreciate inside jokes, but the audience won't know what you're talking about.

***Avoid clichés.** The phrases "spread your wings and fly," "new chapter in our lives," and "be true to yourself" should not appear in your speech, and neither should other clichés. Maybe this is a good place to insert a strong quotation that is not a cliché.

***Give advice sparingly.** Graduation speeches do not have to contain advice, and if you're part of the graduating class, you may not have much advice to give.

***Thank the parents.** Ask everyone in the graduating class to give them a round of applause. This will mean the world to them. Make your mom cry.

***Thank the teachers.** Lord knows teachers don't get enough praise. Thank the principal and the assistant principal too.

***Do not reference that Green Day song.** Thousands of graduation speeches have included lyrics from "Time of Your Life." Give it a rest. And actually, the real name of the song is "Good Riddance." It's an angry breakup song. Green Day intended the lyrics to be sarcastic, not sentimental.

Guidelines

Topic: Buchanan High School Pride and/or Preparation for Life-Long Success.

Eligibility: 2.5 GPA and above with no disciplinary referrals first or second terms

Submission date: Friday, May 1st to Mrs. Hess and/or Mrs. Neal

Length: Approximately 3 minutes

Format: in person

Audition date: Tuesday, May 5th - after school in Mrs. Hess's classroom.

Speech Scoring Rubric

Time: between 2-5 minutes

Text:

Presentation: audience rapport (eye contact, no apologies, poised, etc.), projection and articulation, no distracters (gum, mannerisms, um's, uh's, like's, etc.)

Organization: effective introductory strategy, clear focus, supporting material effectively connected to main idea, satisfying conclusion

Ideas and Content: ample examples (experiences, quotations, poems, statistics, analogies, allusions, etc.), ideas sufficiently developed, creative insights and unique vision, powerful use of language

Speech Scoring Rubric Presenter_____

Time (20 points): between 2-5 minutes _____

_____ Time Points earned

_____ Text : speech by April 23rd.

Presentation (20 points):

_____ audience rapport (eye contact, no apologies, poised, etc.) 5 pts

_____ projection and articulation 5 pts

_____ no distracters (gum, mannerisms, um's, uh's, like's, etc.) 5 pts

_____ dress for success 5 pts

_____ TOTAL Presentation Points 20 pts

Organization (20 points):

_____ Topic addressed -Buchanan High School Pride and/or Preparation for Life-Long

Success 5 pts

_____ Effective introductory strategy clear focus 5 pts

_____ Supporting material effectively connected to main idea 5 pts

_____ Satisfying conclusion 5 pts

_____ TOTAL Points 20 pts

Ideas and Content (20 points):

_____ Ample examples (experiences, quotations, poems, statistics, analogies, allusions, etc.) 5 pts

_____ Ideas sufficiently developed 5 pts

_____ Creative insights and unique vision 5 pts

_____ Powerful use of language 5 pts

_____ TOTAL Points Earned 20 pts

_____ GRAND TOTAL 100 pts