

Good evening Dr. Durkin, Mayor Mitchell, Members of the New Bedford School Committee, district and high school administrators, family and friends...and most importantly you – the graduating members of the class of 2018.

Imagine yourselves thirteen years ago, as you entered school for the very first time. Some of you may have been a little nervous, clasping your parent's hand with the fear of letting go, while others may have entered school with all of the confidence, determination and dreams a little five-year-old could muster. Fast forward eight years to when you first entered high school. Some may have been a little anxious, others roaring to go in pursuit of those dreams. Some of you may have struggled with math or learning a new language. Others may have excelled from start to finish. You all made it here tonight. And while your initial entry to school and your experiences since may have all looked a little bit different – you do share something in common. Those experiences have helped to shape who you are today.

Guided by our school's core values – responsibility, respect, determination, pride and creativity – as well as those instilled in your elementary and middle schools, you are leaving New Bedford High School as good citizens and scholars ready to take what you have learned into the world around us.

But first, let's take a moment to recognize the impact you've had on your school.

In Academics:

- Of tonight's seniors, nearly 40% of those graduating with diplomas have attained honors or highest honors.
- This class embraced new and challenging Advanced Placement coursework and helped to produce the highest numbers of AP qualifying scores in the school's recent history.
- There are 18 NAF graduates this year, with 7 graduating with highly-sought certifications in the National Academy Foundation.
- Last night, more than \$350,000 in local scholarships was awarded to this graduating class.
- And seniors Meng Lian, Peyton Calvao and Abigail Jupin, received the prestigious Jacobs Scholarship enabling them to attend Worcester Poly-Tech,; Western New England University; and Tufts University respectively.

In Athletics:

- Wilson Gomes won the Wrestling sectional tournament, placed second in divisional states, and 7th in the All-State tournament.
- In a 14-4 season, Erin Rezendes broke the 100 goal mark leading the Girls Lacrosse team to a share of the conference Championship

And as a school, Girls Volleyball played to an undefeated season finishing 17-0 and making it to the South Finals for an overall record of 19- and -1

- Girls Basketball finished their regular season at 12-8, earned a share of the Big Three Conference Championship and went to the State tournament for the first time since 2012.

In the Arts:

- New Bedford High School Jazz Band won two Mass Association for Jazz education bronze medals and took 1st place with a rating of Excellent
- New Bedford High School Choir won bronze at the Nutmeg Show Choir Festival; silver at the Andover Show Choir Festival; and Concert Chorale and Treble Chorus received a rating of Excellent at Music in the Parks Festival
- New Bedford High School Drama Club left the Music in the Parks Festival with a 1st place rating of Excellent
- New Bedford High School Whaler Band won the New England Scholastic Band Association Championship with a score of 92.0;
- Took 1st place in Division 3 in the Quincy Parade; and received a rating of Superior in the Music in the Parks Festival
- New Bedford High School String Orchestra won a rating of Excellent at the Music in the Parks Festival (for the 1st time in about 20 years!)
- And Senior Kamal Ritter-Febus was selected for the Southeast Music Educators Association's Senior District Festival on Percussion for Jazz and Bass for Jazz Band

- While Leah Leahy was named Best Overall Vocalist for the Music in the Parks Festival

In Civics and business:

- Over 300 students performed internships and,
- Just last year, senior Allison Pereira won first place and represented New England as a finalist in NFTE's National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in NYC with a series of Equality story books she penned celebrating diversity.

In JROTC:

Under the guidance and leadership of *Seniors* Isaiah Crespo and Joseph Kingara the New Bedford High School JROTC continued in a string of remarkable achievements.

The Drill Team, Physical Fitness Team and the Marksmanship Team all placed in the top 3 at State Competitions throughout the year.

Senior members: Evelyn Ramirez, Brendon Bowman, Suely Depina-Alves all played important roles in their achievements.

The JROTC Academic Team made it to the 2nd Brigade, New England Regionals for an 8th consecutive year. The team came up just short of qualifying for a 5th consecutive national finals appearance.

New Bedford High School won the Raider Cup **as** State Champions. Under the senior leadership of graduates Juan Car Aguilar, Joseph Kingara, Jose Suy, and Josh Munoz, we took home the state Cup defeating 9 other schools in the state finals.

Lastly -

Seniors Brenden Bowman, Joshua Munoz, and Carlos Acosta will be attending United States Army Basic Training this summer. Thank you for your commitment to serve this great nation.

Class of 2018, what an honor it is to not only celebrate with you tonight but to say thank you for your countless contributions to our high school. You believed in New Bedford High School and when you entered, many of you as freshmen, you set a course to ensure others believed as well. Your countless accomplishments, too many to have mentioned all of them tonight, bear that out.

Through your future experiences you will continue to shape your identity – You'll have many more successes and some bumps along the way. But never stop believing in yourselves, remember what you've accomplished at New Bedford High School and imagine what you'll do next to shape the world. Never stop dreaming.

Remember these words – echoed by Walt Disney – a man who in spite of being insecure and introverted did dare to dream big – when he said “All of our dreams can come true...if we have the courage to pursue them.”

Congratulations and Godspeed Class of 2018. You are just one more dream away.