

## **Salutatorian Speech by Ben Ivie**

Good afternoon everyone and thank you all for taking the time out of your busy lives to celebrate with us the graduation of Boyne City High School's 2026 class of seniors. I think I would like to amend that statement, because I know this class of seniors owes more than just thanks for you all attending this ceremony. How about this: thank you all for taking all of the time over the past thirteen years, to help get us to this celebration. After all, we would not be here if it weren't for the support of our families, teachers, coaches, friends, or whatever other role any of you audience members may have played in the lives of these seniors. No matter how small of a contribution you made, I promise you it made a difference. I think I'd like to say that one again too. No matter how small of a contribution you make to something, whether it's a project, a charity, a team, a person, an idea; it makes a difference.

Before we look into the future, let's take a journey through the past. I have been fortunate enough to be a Rambler my whole life, and I have been with most of my fellow seniors for at least thirteen years, so hopefully none of this is horribly wrong. But don't worry, if it is I'm sure there are at least 100 people in this room who can tell me how wrong I am after the ceremony.

If I could sum this class up in a few words, they would be spirit, pride, devotion, and perseverance. Spirit has never been something we've lacked. Whether we were at elementary school field day, supporting our school at sporting events, or competing with the other classes on spirit day, you can often say, "oop, there's the class of 2026. They're really loud. It's kind of obnoxious." By kind of, I mean a lot, we're good at that. We cheer no matter what, we may be winning, it may be close, or we might be completely out of it, but we cheer. You should have heard us the year we almost lost spirit day to the Freshmen. When McDowell put the scores on

the board and we saw we didn't lose, that might be the loudest I've heard us, we were so relieved. That sort of ties into my next word: pride.

The difference between spirit and pride is subtle, but important: spirit is *how* you do something, how you act, how you represent your school, whereas pride is *why* you do. When I say that this class has pride, I mean it. We don't just cheer and represent because we're definitely the best, but because we are proud of who we are and what we have accomplished. After all, we have put so much into everything we do: classes, extracurriculars, personal projects, friends. How could we not be proud to be a Rambler?

Devotion. Devotion is tough to see because it is often best seen outside of school hours. Devotion is the willingness to put the extra effort in to not just be good at something, but to be great. It is the time spent studying, writing, and reviewing your school work; the time spent working on form, building muscle, or memorizing which foot is your right and which is your left so coach doesn't have to keep yelling "your other right foot"; it's the time spent memorizing lines, becoming your character, practicing scales, or learning solos. It's the time you spend, unseen, unheard, refining whatever it is you're working on to be the best you can be, and to lead your peers to do the same. I know that the amount of extra time I have seen *my* peers put into their activity of choice can barely scratch the surface of the hours upon hours spent toiling away, devoted to improving. Devoted to making a difference.

Perseverance is probably the word I would have picked if I was only going to pick one instead of four as I think it to be the most important quality of this class. We have been through a lot together. Obviously, it's hard enough just to make it through seven-ish hours of school five days a week for thirteen years, but to add time spent in sports and at various rehearsals and performances, that's a lot. Especially after COVID. I know it's been six years, but it was tough to

come into high school two years afterward and see the programs that you've been looking forward to participating in for all of middle school reduced to half the size and struggling to survive. Additionally, there have been curriculum changes, missed field trips, technology changes, and countless, countless changes in the world outside of school all of which, I have seen this class push through and become the fine people, the leaders that they are. We have persevered through many challenges, and after each one emerged stronger, and more prepared to contribute to the future; to make a difference.

As we look to the future, we may see a lot of uncertainty not just in our lives, but our families' lives, our friends' lives, even the future of our world; but I implore you: attack the future with spirit, with pride, with devotion, and *especially* with perseverance. Do not give up. You will face adversity, there will be obstacles to overcome, for all of us. They are not there to stop you or slow you down, they are there to help you learn, to help you improve, and to show you what you're capable of. If you give it your all, if you face those trials in life the same way I have seen this class face what we've faced in our time together, you will probably surprise yourself.

Before I conclude my speech, and don't worry, we're almost there, I would once again like to thank you all for your amazing support. Once again, I would like to thank families, teachers, coaches, and friends, but I would also like to thank some very important people who have made a difference, and don't get enough credit for it. These are our custodians, our kitchen staff, our secretaries, counselors, nurses, IT people, and anybody else I've missed, which I hope is nobody but I'm sorry and thank you if I did.

As we continue with the rest of this ceremony, I would like you all to remember: today is not about us. That's not to say we shouldn't be proud of what we have accomplished over the

course of thirteen years, and certainly we deserve to celebrate, but today is not about you, it's not about the audience or the staff, and it is certainly not about me, it's about the future. Today is about the differences, no matter how big or small, you will make in the world throughout the rest of your life. To conclude this speech, I would like to leave all of you in this room with advice from people who are much, much wiser than me to carry with you as you go forward and make a difference. Do not try to be the best, in the wise words of Qui-Gon Jinn, "There is always a bigger fish". Give everything your all, and don't settle for less than you're capable of, as Yoda says, "Do or do not, there is no try". See the value in both sides of an argument and the value that lies in between, or as Obi-Wan Kenobi says, "Only a Sith deals in absolutes". Finally, and I will let this one speak for itself, in the adapted words of Buddha, "Believe nothing, no matter where you read it or who has said it, not even if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason, and your own common sense".