

Hillsdale Community Schools

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May 29, 2021

Dear Hillsdale Community Schools families,

We hope you are staying safe and healthy. We also hope you enjoy some well-deserved time off this weekend.

We are looking forward to the Hillsdale High School graduation ceremony next week where we will celebrate the hard work, creativity and many accomplishments of our outstanding senior class. Their amazing work stands out as a bright spot in what has been a challenging year for all of us.

This is also a celebration of our parents, family members and employees, all of whom play important roles in preparing these inspiring young people for success. To all of you: THANK YOU!

Each year, our valedictorians craft and deliver celebratory speeches to their peers, families and school community at graduation. This is a time for our students to take pride in their accomplishments, reflect on their achievements and look ahead to the future. This year is no different, and we're very proud of each of our 13 valedictorians. The personal reflections by our valedictorians regarding their time at Hillsdale Community Schools and their unique perspectives on life are always a highlight of our graduation ceremony, and they will be this year as well.

You may be aware of recent media reports regarding Hillsdale High School and a speech written by one of our valedictorians. To keep you informed, our standard practice for decades has been to review and provide feedback to each valedictorian on their speech prior to the ceremony.

I want to make clear that we support free expression and the First Amendment rights of all our students, and all our valedictorians will be able to deliver the speeches they wish to give, consistent with the law. In the past, we have had many valedictorians choose to reference their personal faith, religion and beliefs. In addition, I have issued written administrative guidance through a new directive that clarifies these matters now and into the future. This directive applies to present and future graduation speeches and is available on our web site or by clicking here www.hillsdaleschools.org. We encourage everyone involved, both speakers and listeners, to be open-minded and cognizant of the many different and diverse perspectives in our school community.

Please join me in congratulating our seniors and their many accomplishments. I hope to see you next weekend.

Sincerely,

Shawn Vondra

Superintendent