

Dr. Joseph Barnes  
Graduation Address  
June 10, 2013

Dr. Gutekanst, Dr. Pizzi, School Committee Colleagues,  
Faculty, Parents, Family, Friends, and most especially our  
soon to be graduates of the Class of 2013

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to share  
some thoughts with you during this very important  
event...this milestone in both your lives as well as the lives  
of your parents and families. Graduates...As you leave us  
today, be well aware that, in this the 21st century, you are  
entering a world of specialists.

Whether it be in the fields of medicine, law, business, or  
technology ...any field for that matter...professions call for  
workers to be adept...skilled...yes, specialists in their chosen  
line of work. In medicine we have orthopedic  
surgeons...pediatricians, radiologists. Lawyers specialize in  
tax, real estate or trial law. Technology opens doors to a  
myriad of opportunities from highly specialized software  
engineers to computer systems analysts. The examples are  
endless.

Some of you are now saying..."Hold on, I'm just finishing  
high school...SPECIALIZE IN SOMETHING !!" No need to  
panic. It is usually after undergraduate schooling that one  
begins to gain this expertise...the skills needed to specialize.

So today as 2013 graduates of Needham High School, you  
are a long way off from deciding on a specialized career...a  
long way off from even thinking of graduate school. You are  
still taking a deep breath...a pause from completing what  
has been a meaningful yet small part of a lifetime of  
learning.

Many of you are unsure where your life may lead. Well ...I will tell you...that's just fine...that's exactly where you want to be.

So...after this important event today, once you've had time to relax and celebrate this milestone...what do you do between now and when you need to make decisions...head in a specific direction...establish a career?

**I** suggest that you explore...dabble...wander...investigate.

For most of you Needham has been your world for the past 18 or so years. You have studied, played, and grown in this town. But now you have a chance to go beyond Needham...out into a world with boundless opportunities.

Remember back in your earlier schooling...perhaps in middle school when you took an elective that you may have known little about...maybe experiential education or ceramics or a particular music class. One of these experiences may have opened new doors for you then. Well, in some ways that time has come again.

In high school, as it should be, you were preparing for college admission or some other post high school education. You chose your courses and activities carefully, attempting to succeed in attaining your goal.

Well...Now may be a time to reinvent yourself. The "You" of Needham High may become someone much different in the years ahead. Allow yourself to learn and experience things that till now you have only dreamed of. Now is your chance.

Take an art course, study another language, join a photography club or participate in a club sport...step out of

your comfort zone and...**allow yourself to learn for the sake of learning...not because it sets the stage for next steps**...concentrate on and enjoy the present for a bit ...you deserve a breather...take it.

If your parents grumble, as they may, about what appears to be a frivolous course on your record, tell them that an older man who has gained some perspective, advised you to do it. Blame me !!

Mark Twain, our beloved American author and humorist once said, and I quote..."Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you **didn't** do than the things you did do. So, throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover."

Congratulations Graduates...you have a world of unimaginable experiences before you.

Thank You