



March 2019

**Attention all seniors:**

Traditionally, there are two class speakers at commencement. One speech is given by the valedictorian, and the other by a selected senior. If you are interested in preparing and delivering a speech for this year's graduation ceremony, here is the information you will need to submit a speech for selection.

**Your task:** Write a speech that you would want to deliver in front of your peers and the Vestal community. First, decide what you want to accomplish with your speech: inspire, entertain, raise awareness, educate, or reminisce (a combination of these might be most memorable). Use appropriate stories, pertinent poems, song lyrics, or real-world examples to illustrate your ideas. Inspire your fellow graduates about life after graduation. Try to think outside the box and avoid common or cliché graduation speeches. Remember, it is important to consider your entire audience during the drafting process: you will be presenting at the Binghamton University Events Center not only to your fellow graduates, but also to family, friends, faculty, administration, and the Vestal School Board.

**Requirements:** Speeches must be 3-5 minutes in length. All submissions must be typed and double-spaced. Be sure to properly edit your speech and make any necessary revisions before turning it in. Note the evaluation guidelines on the back of this notice.

**Deadline: 3 pm on Friday, May 3.** Email your speech to [dmchantry@vestal.k12.ny.us](mailto:dmchantry@vestal.k12.ny.us) or submit a copy to the Assistant Principals' Office.

**Selection Process:** A committee will meet to review all entries and five finalists will be chosen. Finalists will be notified by Friday, May 10. Finalists will then be given approximately two weeks to rehearse and prepare their speech for presentation to the selection committee. Presentations will take place after school in the auditorium on **Wednesday, May 22**. All finalists will be notified, in writing, of the committee's final decision.

**Presentations:** Speeches must be well-rehearsed with limited use of notes. Carefully read through the speech evaluation guide on the back of this paper for presentation requirements.

# Speech Evaluation Guidelines

**Introduction:** Attention-getting with full eye contact throughout. Establish a presence from the first word. Avoid leading with filler words or sounds.

**Conclusion:** Transition to your concluding statements in some way. Conclude with a thought-provoking and memorable closing statement.

**Rehearsal and preparation:** It will be quite apparent if you have properly rehearsed. Incorporate pauses in your speech to calm nerves and maintain a reasonable pace.

**Eye contact:** Your goal is to maximize eye contact. Specifically, you need to look at each section of the Events Center, establish eye contact at the end of a thought, look at the entire audience continually, and refer to notes only occasionally.

**Posture:** Avoid swaying or leaning on the podium. Stand up straight to show confidence in your message.

**Gestures:** Avoid fidgeting. Avoid tapping the podium or any other distractions (hair, jewelry, etc.). Try to incorporate appropriate gestures, but avoid “talking” with your hands.

**Use of voice:** Avoid filler sounds or phrases (like, and, um, uh, and stuff), and avoid mumbling. Speak clearly and at an appropriate volume. Vary pitch and tone. Use your voice to emphasize important points. Pause at appropriate moments.

**Energy and enthusiasm:** Your energy and enthusiasm can be contagious. Demonstrate a positive attitude, positive energy, and be enthusiastic.

**Hold the audience:** Keep your audience engaged throughout your speech. You can do this through eye contact, limited reliance on notes, speaking with energy and enthusiasm, and varying pitch and tone.

**Time:** Sticking to the time allotted is vital, especially since the graduation ceremony is planned out far in advance of the actual date.