

HYDE PARK CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Administration Offices
P.O. Box 2033
Hyde Park, New York 12538-8033
Telephone: (845) 229-4000 - FAX: (845) 229-4056

Carole A. Pickering
Superintendent of Schools

Wayne L. Kurlander
Assistant Superintendent
for Business

Cora Stempel
Assistant Superintendent
for Instruction & Personnel

Daniel Seyler-Wetzel
Assistant Superintendent
for Pupil Services

June 29, 2009

Dear Hyde Park Families,

The 2008-09 school year happily concluded with our FDR graduation ceremonies on Saturday, June 27th. I thought you might like to read my departing message to these fine young men and women who completed their education at FDR.

Thank you for your support and efforts on behalf of our school district. Have a happy and safe summer.

Sincerely,

Carole A. Pickering
Carole A. Pickering

GRADUATION REMARKS TO THE CLASS OF 2009

Miracle on the Hudson

Or

A Perfect Landing

“Brace for impact” were Captain Chesley Sullenberger’s final three words as he brought his plane to a perfect landing in the Hudson River last January. We all watched these pictures over and over, and still marvel at this incredible human feat where all survived and no one was seriously injured. How did something almost miraculous like this occur?

This whole event continues to be analyzed and reviewed by many, all eager to understand and learn exactly what happened. Much credit was given to the crew and first responders. All but one passenger refrained from hysterics and followed orders. Had any

Seeking 21st Century Equity & Excellence

group not done its job, the likelihood that all might have survived is zero. However, the pilot's experience, skill, quick mind and calm had to be engaged first.

When a talk show host asked Captain Sullenberger what was going through his mind when he commanded "brace for impact," he said simply, "**I have a job to do.**" So, he did it and he did it masterfully. While he had the **primary** job and first responsibility in this situation, he humbly repeats that it would have been less successful, even disastrous, if others did not do their job in this potentially fatal circumstance.

Today, dear graduates, an analogy of this event seems appropriate for you, the class of 2009. Here you are at the commencement of the rest of your lives, soon with diploma in hand. Sometimes you are like the crew assigned to the well-being of others, or perhaps a first responder, rescuing a troubled friend or relative. Often, you are the passenger, who must entrust your welfare to other responsible persons, hoping they truly know what they are doing.

Like the travelers on flight 1549, it is good to know when to stay calm and follow directions. **At all times however, you are the pilot.** You are the pilot of your own life, though you rely on others to do their jobs to help you land the plane. There will be countless imperfect landings in your life, even a few minor crashes, but hopefully nothing so serious that you can't recover and start over.

Today, each of you begins a new stage in your life. Perhaps you are certain of where you are going, or deep down, feel a little lost and adrift. Perhaps you are more fearful and anxious than you let on, or, maybe you feel quite confident about your next destination. Captain Sullenberger thought he was making one more short and ordinary trip from New York City to Charlotte, North Carolina. He piloted his plane as he did every day, with the sobering knowledge that he carried precious human cargo. Then, birds got in the way. Yes, flocks of birds flew into the plane's jet engines. That is how life goes. You may be flying high one day, then suddenly one variable may change everything, and you have to "brace for impact," because you have a job to do.

If you are fortunate, you will have a crew and first responders to assist you. You will have quiet passengers, those loyal followers who know they must take your lead, because after all you are the pilot, and ultimately, only you can land the plane. By the way, every commercial plane has a co-pilot, skilled and licensed to take over in the event of pilot trouble. Who, or what resource is your co-pilot?

The story of Captain Sullenberger and flight 1549 is 100% factual and a recent miracle (just in case you didn't believe in them). While we may draw wisdom, courage and life

lessons from many ancient, historical or literary sources, remember that there are little stories and smaller miracles that happen all around us and across the globe every minute, every day. **Today each of you is a miracle!** And, why am I so confident in sharing this message with the class of 2009? Because in my six plus decades of life, I know this is the **truth**. I say this while fully acknowledging that I am direction disabled. No matter how many times I see a map or travel a route, my memory struggles to retain the information. In fact, I still get lost at FDR, especially in the pods!

Recently I purchased a new cell phone with an amazing GPS system built into it. Now, all I have to do is enter my destination and a voice starts talking to me. "Turn left, turn right, stay on Route 287 for 5.4 miles." It calls the streets by name and points me to the nearest McDonalds, if I am hungry. Best of all, if I make a wrong turn and lose my way, it calmly repeats: "Recalculating your route, recalculating your route."

Today dear graduates, you are soaring in flight. You've reached this altitude with the help of your families, educators and friends. Still, **you were the pilot**, and so it will be for the rest of your life. But, remember there are human GPS systems to help you recalculate your route when needed.

As your superintendent, it has been a privilege and an honor to be a small part of your flight crew during your formative years. As you depart your alma mater today and commence the rest of your life, I wish each of you a safe journey, good weather and many perfect landings. Congratulations and God bless you all.

Carole A. Pickering,
Superintendent of Schools