

Dr. Barile's 2019 Convocation Remarks - *Gratitude*

Dear Brookfield's Best,

This morning I want to talk about gratitude and appreciation; our theme this year...GRATITUDE. I am grateful to be here, to serve, to be with you. We don't have to do this work...we get to do this work! It is a privilege!

An attitude of gratitude is an important personal and professional characteristic that we must collectively embrace. These two simple, yet powerful words, are assets that will serve us well in our daily lives and in our futures. Gratitude is the foundation from which a successful life, career and relationships are built. An attitude of gratitude is priceless.

Personally, I am grateful for what we share: We get to be together and do this sacred work – supporting children to become their best selves – helping them Create Their Tomorrow!

1. I am grateful for all of you (teacher, custodian, nurse, secretary, administrator, para, unaffiliated and our BOE) – It's important to reflect on how far we have come. We have and are getting a lot right here in Brookfield. There are some remarkable accomplishments which cannot be overlooked. **You all make it happen.**

Together we have implemented and accomplished: *Our 5 year Strategic Plan – we have accomplished almost all of the goals in just 3 years. It's an incredible achievement!*

- Essential practices for financial health and operational control
- A cohesive capital improvement and facility maintenance plans, including a town supported new school project
- A strong foundation for instruction, assessment, and standards-aligned curriculum & development
- Data-driven professional learning opportunities to build the capacity of our teaching professionals
- A first class technology infrastructure to support operations and 21st century instructional programs and we now have an additional 50 more wireless access points

- Supporting evidence indicating that we are closing the achievement gap between our High Need and Non High Need students.
 - US News & World report recently recognized Brookfield High School as among the nation’s best because of this student achievement.
 - This summer the Board unanimously voted to support our journey into utilizing virtual high school technology to offer more unique and exotic courses, specifically, our implementation of American Sign Language.
 - So importantly - Student Wellness – The Implementation of the RULER approach to social & emotional learning for students and adults; development of a system of a continuum of academic & behavioral supports
 - In fact, I had the pleasure of listening to Dr. Bracket of Yale. Many of you remember him from a few years ago at our convocation then – founder of RULER... he talked about... – feedback, collaboration, and gratitude... implementing RULER K-12 in support of student wellness.
 - We have positioned ourselves so that we can focus on all that we have accomplished and initiated. We will remain steadfast in our pursuit of consistent, high quality instruction and curriculum development...enhancing and launching from the rock solid foundation we have built together over the past four years. That is the focus.
2. I am grateful for A profession where we are afforded the opportunity, each year to begin anew and impact children, and our nation. ...our impact can be likened to the pebble in the pond, with a ripple effect that will go on to touch upon others forever. The sole reason for the existence of our profession is the students/ what we do in life echoes an eternity.
 3. I am grateful to our community – we are on our way to building a new elementary school, we have the materials & the resources, and the professional development we need to

teach our students well. In fact, the town officials have unanimously provided funding for an additional Kindergarten class to meet a sudden enrollment spike.

4. I am grateful for our BOE. The Members are all about kids...Our Board Members genuinely want what is best for the children of Brookfield. They are volunteers and many of you may not know this, by being for students and supporting all of us...During the 8-month budget season, the administrative team and BOE are out most nights ensuring that our most expensive resource (all of you-the faculty and staff) are provided with said resources so we can have small class sizes for our students...with 19 and 20 students in a class....

It is our Brookfield Board of Education's commitment & expectation that you are able to meet all of our students needs with the utmost professionalism, care and skill. We have the materials, professional learning, curriculum and small class sizes – in other words, we have everything we need to ensure all, 100% of our students reach their learning goals. In Brookfield we do not put limits on our student's potential.

5. I am grateful for our Families - Our panorama surveys overwhelming indicate that parents are grateful for the fine educators in our schools, your dedication, your ability to connect, and your communication regarding student progress.
6. I am grateful for all 2,700 students. Person after person, whether educator, parent, elected official, stakeholders, advisors, or coaches from other towns roundly report the following: "Brookfield has great kids!"... Folks, we have a lot to be grateful for and there is no excuse not to achieve greatness!

So Why do I share this with you? Why is gratitude our theme?

When we search for the good, we find the good. And conversely when we search for the bad, the negative, and look to pick and poke holes...we will find exactly that... bad – what a waste of energy and time. I don't know about you, but if I have the choice to be gracious and exercise a positive attitude of gratitude or to seek out misery, and individuals with toxic personalities - I choose the former. We have free will to choose how we will approach each other, our students, and life's challenges of which there are many... and let me tell you a little secret...something that you already know...the challenges that will be thrown your way exist everywhere and they never go away, not in the summer, not when you retire, not with smaller class sizes...it's called teaching and it's called life. Your attitude and your approach...your response to the obstacles are what will set you apart for a fulfilled career, relationships, and life.

Napoleon Hill talks about Gratitude as a “beautiful word”. I imagine that he describes gratitude as beautiful because it describes a mind frame of appreciation... perhaps a sense of joy and calm. A state of gratitude will give you energy. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude is simply a matter of developing a new habit. Simple to understand but not necessarily easy to do. However, we must sincerely feel the gratitude which we express. Words will be meaningless and empty, frankly, phony if not genuinely felt as an honest expression. In fact, those people who express gratitude each day, compounded over time have been shown to have better health and better sleep.

Each of us has numerous concerns in our lives that could cause anxiety or a sense of frustration or malaise. If we allow the negative thoughts to fester, they will overtake our general attitude and become a part of our identity. We also have friends, family and colleagues who relish negativity and a desire to poison our pursuit of happiness. Rather, you have the power to decide to look to the embers of positivity, joy, and gratitude before you.... and if consciously fostered, this energy

will become an inspirational flame of enthusiasm. Blow the bellows on these embers until a raging fire of excitement, insight, perspective and inspiration drives your daily actions and goals.

It is a choice my friends. See the good or see the bad. You decide. Make it a habit to think and act with gratitude. Let's take action this school year. Rather than looking back from June of 2020 on unfulfilled, good intentions and half completed goals; let's make it a daily habit to do something, anything; a gesture, a statement, or a new routine that with earnest effort, which will bring joy to others. Communicating words of praise to someone in need of a boost is a priceless gift and it's an endless resource for provision, say "Thank you", Say "I appreciate you for what you have done". Make a phone call or send an email or text just to see how someone is doing, spend time with a loved one, let a colleague know they are doing a good job, or simply pick up a wrapper in the hallway to model pride in your school... are just some things that you can do. Feel free to let your boss know how much you appreciate them and their hard work (lol). And selfishly, these kinds of actions benefit you the most because your attitude of gratitude will develop, and then habitually you will become more joyful and have more fun. Just imagine what will happen if we all engage in such repeated actions. Think about the energy that can take us from 211 to the 212 degree boiling point of harnessed power we have talked about over the years. The power it creates for unbridled enthusiasm, energy and results is before us.

Dr. Bracket from Yale/RULER has found that the emotion that is hurting individuals the most is ENVY - think about that, if you are experiencing ENVY... where is that emotion coming from and why?... He discussed that it's the coveting of what others have, that ENVY which is driving unpleasant emotions...this I know ... that can't be healthy. What emotion is the opposite of ENVY...it's GRATITUDE! Reflect upon your mindset. As American Music Treasure, Cheryl

Crow, sings in her classic song, Soak Up the Sun, “It’s not having what you want, It’s wanting what you got.”

As educators it is critical that we are mindful of the drivers of emotions for ourselves and our students...**Emotions Drive:**

- Attention & Memory/ Decision Making
- Relationship Quality/ Physical & Mental Health
- Performance & Creativity

Some of you may have viewed the new video which features our approach to student wellness, positive environment and specifically, the RULER approach. I’d like to show it to everyone now.

SHOW VIDEO

As I close my remarks;

Six words I shared with the grade 8 and 12 graduates this year: **You become... what you think about. 6 simple words**We truly reap what we sow.

As your superintendent, I commit, and therefore expect all of you to commit likewise, to actions which support gratitude, appreciation, and enthusiasm to enhance each school’s organizational climate. Commit to appreciating existing relationships and to building new relationships.

Bring the gratitude, and the attitude of joy and bold energy every day. Create Your Tomorrow.

And let’s form an environment to help create a beautiful tomorrow for each other and all of our students.

Get after it this year. 400 of Brookfield’s Best, working with unified purpose is an unstoppable force.