



Santa Barbara County Education Office

4400 Cathedral Oaks Rd, PO Box 6307, Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6307
Telephone: (805) 964-4711 • FAX: (805) 964-4712 • sbceo.org

Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

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For information: David J. Lawrence
(805) 964-4710, ext. 5282

Commencement indeed

By Dr. Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

It has always struck me as fitting and important that we refer to graduations as “commencements,” focusing on what is beginning rather than what is ending.

With pride and deep satisfaction, we acknowledge the hard work that brought our students to this point and we celebrate their academic and social achievements to date. However, we also look ahead to what those wonderful accomplishments will reap, and what new paths will be taken next week, next year, and beyond.

Commencements represent the first step into the future for our young people. We share the hope that this is the beginning of a life filled with important contributions to our communities, our state, nation, and future. What will that future look like? What is actually about to commence?

The answer is different for every student, of course. But just as we hold certain expectations and requirements for students in achieving graduation, we also envision greatness for our graduates in the days ahead. Whether students enter immediately into higher education or directly into the workforce or military, they are commencing their next giant steps forward, and into a new dimension of responsibility.

Responsibility is the hallmark of graduates at every level. For high school graduates, it means joining a society of working men and women, of families, of community members, of volunteers, and, perhaps most importantly in a democracy, joining a culture of voters.

Our system of government provides all members of our society the opportunity — and responsibility — to vote for those who will set the policies and practices that govern us all. An informed, well-educated electorate is vital to the smooth functioning of our democracy. It requires time and effort to learn about issues and candidates, especially when life is complicated and full of competing priorities.

After visiting our schools and meeting with high school seniors countywide, I am confident that the overwhelming majority of our graduates are ready to lead responsible, well-informed lives, and have the tools at hand to make a positive impact for themselves and for our society at large.

Across our great county, students are graduating from high schools and colleges, promoting from preschool to elementary school, from sixth grade to junior high, from middle school to high school. This is a time for great celebration and excitement.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of our children, grandchildren, neighbors, and friends, let us keep in mind what “commencement” is all about — the start of the next phase of life and of new responsibility. We congratulate the graduates and their families and friends, as we look forward together to the world they will join and help shape.

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