



Standard Operating Procedures
Student Commencement
Handbook

APPROVED: 5.19.2020

REVISED: 5.14.2021

Student Commencement Handbook

Policy Cross Reference Sheet

This handbook is an administrative procedure of the District and subject to policies adopted by the Board of Trustees. In case of conflict between administrative procedures and Board policy, policy shall prevail.

Date of Superintendent Approval:  *5-14-2021*

Version Number: (i.e. "2018.1") 2020.1

The contents of this handbook relate to the following Board policies:

Policy	Title	Page(s)
FMH(LOCAL)	Student Activities – Commencement	*

* The above listed policy relates to areas in which student commencement is necessary. This handbook speaks directly to student commencement activities.

Table of Contents

<u>Policy Cross Reference Sheet</u>	2
<u>Philosophy</u>	4
<u>STUDENT SPEAKERS AT COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES</u>	4
<u>Eligibility</u>	4
<u>Selection Process</u>	4
<u>Written Application</u>	5
<u>Interview Application Process</u>	6
<u>Campus Selection Committee</u>	6
<u>Consequences</u>	6
<u>Notification of Selection</u>	7
<u>Length of Student Speeches</u>	8
<u>Order of Ceremonies</u>	8
<u>Recognitions and Scholarship Awards</u>	9
<u>Exhibit A: Graduation Speakers Evaluation Rubric</u>	10
<u>Exhibit B: Graduation Speakers Interview Rubric</u>	12
<u>Exhibit C: Graduation Speakers Evaluator Scoring Sheet</u>	13
<u>Exhibit D: Honor Speaker Teacher Recommendation</u>	14
<u>Exhibit E: Class of 2020 Partial Implementation Plan</u>	15

STUDENT SPEAKERS AT COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES

Philosophy

The Board believes that commencement is a time to celebrate student achievement and highlight students for attaining the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate. Therefore, the District is committed to providing opportunities to recognize students during commencement.

The District creates a limited public forum consisting of an opportunity for certain students, as identified in FMH(Local) to speak at graduation ceremonies. For each speaker, the District shall set a maximum time limit reasonable and appropriate to the occasion.

Character is at the core of student development in Fort Bend ISD. The selected honor graduate speakers therefore, shall be those who exhibit great character and embody the attributes of the District's Profile of a Graduate.

Eligibility

Students are eligible to use the limited public forum to address their classmates at graduation if they:

1. Meet all requirements to graduate and participate in commencement exercises;
2. Have no discipline infractions that are associated with academic dishonesty or have resulted in ISS, OSS, or DAEP placement during the school year preceding graduation, and;
3.
 - a. Are a designated Honor Graduate (See EIC (LOCAL)), or;
 - b. Hold a position of leadership on campus.

Selection Process

The selection of graduation speakers shall be based on neutral criteria designed to select the students who best exhibit the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate using a two-step selection process:

1. Written Application
2. Interview

A District screening committee will use the prescribed rubric (see Exhibit A: Graduation Speakers Evaluation Rubric) to identify the top eight (8) scores from the written application process. The individuals with the top eight scores will be moved to the interview level of the selection process, to be conducted by the campus selection committee.

Students receiving the four (4) highest scores on the interview will be selected as the graduation speakers, with the highest score providing the Honor Speech. The remaining students will be allowed to select his/her speaking role in order of highest score to lowest score.

Written Application

Eligible students wishing to deliver the Honor Speech, the recognition and scholarship awards speech, the welcome remarks and the closing remarks during commencement exercises must submit via an online application the following items no later than the first Monday in March:

1. Letter of Interest - The letter of interest shall be no more than two double-spaced pages in length and must express why the student wants to address his/her peers as the honor speaker. The letter of interest will need to address the questions below:
 - a. In what ways have you used and developed the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate and how will they be useful in your future endeavors?
 - b. In what ways do you think your experience in Fort Bend ISD is both similar to and different from other students?
 - c. What about you makes you a good representative of your class?
2. Service and Leadership Resume – The service and leadership resume shall include dates associated with each experience and describe the following:
 - a. Elected or appointed leadership positions with areas of responsibilities, accomplishments, and/or skills acquired;
 - b. Organizations, committees, or boards for which the student holds or has held membership during his/her time in high school and any details of the work in identified groups; and
 - c. Scholarships, honors, awards, or special recognition.
3. Reference Letters – Two or more teacher recommenders’ email addresses must be submitted along with the application. Teachers will receive an email with a link to complete the recommendation survey. Teachers must be selected from the Junior and/or Senior level.

District Screening Committee

The Department of School Leadership and the Department of Communications shall establish the Honor Speaker Screening Committee no later than the first Monday of March. The District Screening Committee shall be comprised of three teachers from each high school campus, appointed by the campus principal.

The Department of School Leadership shall convene the District Screening Committee to train and calibrate

prior to reviewing applications. The training shall include a review of the prescribed rubric (see Exhibit A: Graduation Speakers Evaluation Rubric) including examples of each domain. The screening committee will participate in a blind screening process using the prescribed rubric to identify the top eight (8) scorers from each campus in the written application process. The individuals with the top eight scores will be moved to the Interview level of the selection process, to be conducted by the campus selection committee.

Interview Application Process

The top eight (8) students from each campus receiving the highest scores on the written application rubric (see Exhibit A) will be provided to the corresponding campus and move to the interview level of the selection process. This level will include the following:

1. Students will prepare a written speech in response to the following writing prompt:
 - a. What is one experience you had in school that has shaped you that you will never forget and might be shared with other graduates?
2. Students will present their writing prompt to the campus interview committee in speech format with a time limit of three (3) minutes.
3. Students will be asked a maximum of 10 questions based on the Profile of a Graduate. The Department of School Leadership will maintain a bank of questions from which the interview committees may choose.

Campus Selection Committee

The principal shall establish the campus Honor Speaker Selection Committee no later than the first Monday of March. This committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Campus Principal
2. Associate or Assistant Principal
3. Lead Counselor
4. Four teachers selected by the campus principal.

Consequences

For speech that:

1. Is obscene, vulgar, lewd, or indecent;
2. Creates reasonable cause to believe that the speech would result in material and substantial interference with the graduation ceremony or the rights of others;
3. Promotes unlawful activity that would pose a threat to student safety, including, but not limited to, illegal drug and alcohol use;
4. Violates the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person;
5. Contains defamatory statements about public figures or others; or
6. Advocates imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action;

The student shall be subject to suspension of public remarks and withholding of their diploma until deemed appropriate by the Superintendent or designee.

Notification of Selection

The student selected as the Honor Speaker will be notified of his/her status no later than the fourth Monday of the month of April preceding graduation. This notification will be delivered in writing to the student and his/her parents.

Upon completion of the third-nine-weeks, the assistant superintendent and/or designee will meet with the selected students and his/her parents to review the order of commencement exercises and consequences for not following speaking guidelines, to include but not be limited to the immediate revocation of the right to speak during the commencement ceremony.

In cases where a class valedictorian and/or salutatorian is not selected as an honor speaker or does not complete the application process, the class valedictorian and/or salutatorian will be given the option to participate in the ceremony with brief remarks.

Length of Student Speeches

Students delivering the welcome and closing remarks shall have a maximum of one- and one-half minutes to do so. The student delivering the Recognitions and Scholarship Awards remarks shall have no more than two minutes to do so. The Honor Speaker shall have a maximum of four minutes to deliver remarks and will rehearse the timing of prepared remarks with a staff member of his or her choice.

Order of Ceremonies

The following is the District-approved standard order of ceremonies for commencement exercises. Any deviation from the standard protocol shall require prior approval by the Superintendent or designee.

1. Processional
2. Welcome (*Principal/Department of School Leadership*)
3. Presentation of Colors
4. National Anthem
5. Student Welcome Remarks and Introduction of Platform Guests (*Student*)
6. Recognitions and Scholarship Awards (*Student*)
7. Introduction of Honor Speaker and Remarks (*Superintendent*)*
8. Honor Speaker Address (*Student*)*
9. Recognition of Class
10. Presentation of Class
11. Acceptance of Class
12. Presentation of Diplomas
13. Closing remarks (*Student*)
14. Alma Mater

** Should the honor speaker not be the class valedictorian, the principal (or video recognition) will note the valedictorian with a brief description of their honors.*

The following adjusted Order of Ceremonies will be used for ceremonies where neither the class valedictorian nor the salutatorian were named as speakers:

1. Processional
2. Welcome (*Principal/Department of School Leadership*)
3. Salutatorian Remarks and Introduction of Platform Guests
4. Principal's Message
5. Presentation of Colors
6. National Anthem, Pledges of Allegiance and Introduction of Valedictorian
7. Valedictorian Remarks and Student Recognitions (scholarships, attendance, and military graduates)
8. Student Recognitions of Honor Grads and Introduction of Honor Speaker (*Student*)
9. Introduction of Honor Speaker and Remarks (*Superintendent*)*

10. Honor Speaker Address (*Student*)*
11. Recognition of Class
12. Presentation of Class
13. Acceptance of Class
14. Presentation of Diplomas
15. Closing remarks (*Student*)
16. Alma Mater

The following adjusted Order of Ceremonies will be used for ceremonies where the class salutatorian was named as a speaker:

1. Processional
2. Welcome (*Principal/Department of School Leadership*)
3. Salutatorian Remarks and Introduction of Platform Guests
4. Principal's Message
5. Presentation of Colors
6. National Anthem
7. Student Welcome Remarks and Introduction of Platform Guests (*Student*)
8. Recognitions and Scholarship Awards (*Student*)
9. Introduction of Honor Speaker and Remarks (*Superintendent*)*
10. Honor Speaker Address (*Student*)*
11. Recognition of Class
12. Presentation of Class
13. Acceptance of Class
14. Presentation of Diplomas
15. Closing remarks (*Student*)
16. Alma Mater

Recognitions and Scholarship Awards

Graduates who obtain high academic honors, scholarships and other achievements shall be recognized during the commencement exercises. The speaker shall recognize the Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Magna Cum Laude, Suma Cum Laude and Cum Laude graduates. Scholarship recipients and graduates who enlist in military service shall also be recognized during the Recognitions and Scholarship Awards portion of the ceremony.

Exhibit A

Graduation Speakers Evaluation Rubric

Graduation Speakers Evaluation Rubric

Speaker's Name: _____ Student ID: _____

Evaluator: _____ Campus: _____

Representing one's class as a speaker during graduation is a great distinction afforded to the students whose reputation and work during their time in high school speaks to the attributes of the District's Profile of a Graduate. In evaluating the student's transcript, letter of interest, and service and leadership resume, please assess the student's exhibition of the seven attributes of the Profile of a Graduate.

Attribute	Rating 0	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3
<p>Equipped with Skills for Life Fort Bend ISD graduates exhibit grit and determination in all aspects of life; respect self and others; engage in healthy life choices; are literate and articulate; proficient with technology; and meaningfully and practically apply knowledge in productive ways.</p>	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else
<p>Servant Leader Fort Bend ISD graduates demonstrate confidence while maintaining a humble and kind demeanor; prioritizing the needs of others while accepting responsibility for themselves and are accountable for their own actions; are optimistic; and strive to bring out the best in others.</p>	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else
<p>Effective Communicator Fort Bend ISD graduates communicate clearly both orally and in writing; respectfully and actively listen to others; appropriately engage in courageous conversations; and appropriately adapt their communication style to the audience.</p>	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else
<p>Critical Thinker Fort Bend ISD graduates are visionary and solutions-oriented problem solvers; are inquisitive and innovative; and have the courage to actively challenge conventional methods in</p>	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else

Attribute	Rating 0	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3
order to improve themselves and the world around them.				
Compassionate Citizen Fort Bend ISD graduates are empathetic to their fellow citizens, exhibiting care and concern for others; are inclusive and embrace differences; are culturally aware; actively engage in improving our diverse community; exercise their right to vote; and are dependable, respectful, trustworthy, and self-disciplined.	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else
Collaborative Team Member Fort Bend ISD graduates work effectively with others to achieve group goals; take actions that respect the needs and contributions of others; yield their own objectives to the goals of the team; and positively facilitate and contribute to teamwork.	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else
Life-Long Learner Fort Bend ISD graduates approach life with wonder and curiosity; seek opportunities to be creative; possess a thirst for knowledge and the ability to adapt to change; and are academically prepared to pursue and attain futures beyond what they can imagine.	Student did not share information to assess this attribute in their submitted materials	Student had an experience where they had to exhibit these skills	Student had an experience and demonstrated that they learned something that helped them	Student learned something and taught/helped someone else
Total Score				

Academic Standing

- Student is the Valedictorian = 5 points
- Student is the Salutatorian = 4 points
- Student is graduating Summa Cum Laude = 3 points
- Student is graduating Magna Cum Laude = 2 points
- Student is graduating in the top quarter of their class = 1 point

Reviewer Scoring

- Total Profile Attributes Score: _____
(+)
- Academic Standing Score: _____
(+)
- Average Score of Teacher Recommendations: _____
(=)
- Total Applicant Score: _____

Exhibit B

Graduation Speakers Interview Rubric

Graduation Speakers Interview Rubric

This scoring sheet should be used to evaluate each candidate’s delivery of their three-minute response to the prompt: “What is one experience you had in school that has shaped you that you will never forget and might be shared with other graduates?” The Campus Selection Committee member should fill this form out after listening to each candidate’s performance.

Student’s Name: _____

Student’s ID: _____

Evaluator Name: _____

Campus: _____

CATGEORY	4	3	2	1
Verbal Communication	Speaks clearly and distinctly all of the time.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most of the time	Speaks somewhat clearly and lacks a distinct voice.	Often mumbles or cannot be understood.
Non-Verbal Communication	Facial expressions and body language generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others.	Facial expressions and body language sometimes generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others.	Facial expressions and body expressions are used to try and generate enthusiasm, but seem somewhat faked.	Very little use of facial expressions or body language. Did not generate much interest in topic being presented.
Content	Shows a full understanding of the topic and clearly focuses on a central idea/theme.	Shows a good understanding of the topic and mainly focuses on a central idea/theme.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic, but does not focus on a central idea/theme.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well and does not have a central idea/theme.
Posture and Audience Engagement	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
District Mission & Vision	Explicit reference to the Profile of a Graduate and the ways they have been prepared to pursue their future goals.	References the Profile of a Graduate or makes a reference to the District mission to “Inspire and equip students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.”	Briefly demonstrates how they have been equipped for their future, but only makes a vague reference to the District’s Profile of a Graduate.	Does not make a connection between their story, the Profile or the District’s mission.
Time-Limit	Presentation is on or under the time limit.			Presentation is over the time limit.

Total Score: _____

Exhibit D

Honor Speaker Teacher Recommendation

The following form is to be completed by teachers via an online survey that will be emailed to them. Dear Teacher, congratulations on being selected to provide a recommendation for a student who is applying to represent their class as a speaker at this year’s commencement exercises. Please complete this recommendation form honestly and to the best of your ability.

Are you currently this student’s teacher?	Yes	No	Contact Phone
District e-Mail Address			How long have you known this student?

Assign one of the following ratings to each of the statements below as it describes this student applicant.

- 4 I strongly agree with this statement as it describes this applicant.
- 3 I agree with this statement as it describes this applicant.
- 2 I disagree with this statement as it describes this applicant.
- 1 I strongly disagree with this statement as it describes this applicant.
- 0 I am unable to rate this applicant in this area.

- _____ This student exhibits grit and determination, facing challenges as an opportunity to grow.
- _____ This student shows respect for themselves and others.
- _____ This student uses what is learned “to make a difference” on campus and in the community.
- _____ This student appears self-confident.
- _____ This student communicates clearly both orally and in writing.
- _____ This student has challenged conventional methods in order to improve themselves and the world around them.
- _____ This student is empathetic, exhibiting care and concern for others.
- _____ This student is culturally aware.
- _____ This student is dependable and trustworthy.
- _____ This student works effectively with others to achieve group goals.
- _____ This student takes actions that respect the needs and contributions of others.
- _____ This student approaches life with wonder and curiosity.
- _____ This student seeks opportunities to be creative.
- _____ This student is influenced by positive peer pressure and relies on role models for guidance.
- _____ This student is a positive influence on others.
- _____ This student is a great representative of their peers to speak at graduation.

Are you aware of any instances where this student has exhibited academic dishonesty? (YES, NO)

If yes to above, did the student learn from the situation? (YES, NO)

_____ **Total Score**

Exhibit E

Class of 2020 Partial Implementation Plan

****All procedures regarding the Class of 2020 graduation are fluid and subject to change based on the Covid-19 pandemic and how it continues to impact the 2020-21 school year.**

In February of 2020, the expectations within the commencement handbook was approved for distribution to Fort Bend ISD high schools and communicated to parents. District administration decided the timing of the communication made full implementation of the expectations challenging. To provide the clearest transition possible, the following partial implementation plan is in effect for the Class of 2020 graduations.

Interview Application Process

The Salutatorian, Class President, and Student Council President from each campus will move to the interview level of the selection process. This level will include the following:

1. Students will prepare a written speech in response to the following writing prompt:
 - a. What is one experience you had in school that has shaped you that you will never forget and might be shared with other graduates?
2. Students will present their writing prompt to the campus interview committee in speech format with a time limit of three (3) minutes.
3. Students will be asked a maximum of 10 questions based on the Profile of a Graduate. The Department of School Leadership will maintain a bank of questions from which the interview committees may choose.

The final ranking of these three students based on interview performances will determine the order in which the students may choose their speaking portion (Welcome, Recognition and Scholarship Awards, Closing Statement). The Valedictorian will speak as the honor speaker for the Class of 2020. Following, commencement speakers will follow procedures outlined in the body of this document. Furthermore, each students' teachers (including the Valedictorian) will be asked to complete the Honor Speaker Teacher Recommendation (see Exhibit E).

Campus Selection Committee

The principal shall establish the campus Speaker Selection Committee no later than the First Monday of May. This committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Campus Principal
2. Associate or Assistant Principal
3. Lead Counselor
4. Four teachers selected by the campus principal.

Consequences

For speech that:

1. Is obscene, vulgar, lewd, or indecent;
2. Creates reasonable cause to believe that the speech would result in material and substantial interference with the graduation ceremony or the rights of others;
3. Promotes unlawful activity that would pose a threat to student safety, including, but not limited to, illegal drug and alcohol use;
4. Violates the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person;
5. Contains defamatory statements about public figures or others; or
6. Advocates imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action;

The student shall be subject to suspension of public remarks and withholding of their diploma until deemed appropriate by the Superintendent or designee.

Length of Student Speeches

Students delivering the welcome and closing remarks shall have a maximum of one- and one-half minutes to do so. The student delivering the Recognitions and Scholarship Awards remarks shall have no more than two minutes to do so. The Honor Speaker shall have a maximum of four minutes to deliver remarks and will rehearse the timing of prepared remarks with a staff member of his or her choice.

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8. Honor Speaker Address (*Student*)*
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* *Should the honor speaker not be the class valedictorian, the principal (or video recognition) will note the valedictorian with a brief description of their honors.*

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