

## An Open Letter to An Incoming Bolivar High School Freshman

High School. Two words, four years, and a plethora of experiences--some positive, and others not. For some, these are the most cherished years of life. Others wish they could completely erase this period. It's a season of life almost everyone goes through, and now it's your turn. The nervousness and excitement coursing through your veins as you try to figure out who you want to be, what you want to do, and where you're going to end up at the end of this expedition are inevitable. I'm nearing the end of this experience, and I would love to impart the bits of wisdom I have gained to you. I trust that they can be of some help to you as I turn the page to close this chapter and you open the binding to begin.

First, remember that you matter. Especially this year, there will be times when you feel like you're on the bottom of the totem pole. Upperclassmen may intimidate you, your homework load may overwhelm you, and classmates may seem different than you remembered them from middle school. Regardless, you are important and you are capable. Even when it feels like you're alone, numerous people care about you more than you will probably ever realize. Be independent. Be yourself. Let people love you for who you are.

Other people matter, too. There will be days when you miss breakfast, you can't find your favorite shoes, and your car won't start for school. On those days, remember that others are fighting battles of their own. Some won't eat at all and are just hoping to get by. Someone, somewhere, doesn't have any shoes that fit and has to go without. Someone isn't even being afforded an education. Choose gratitude, especially when it's not easy. Try to keep things in perspective and treat others with love and respect even when it's hard. Being kind to others is always worth it.

People really mean it when they say your time here will fly. This phrase may become an annoying cliché to you. Nevertheless, upperclassmen and adults alike spend time reflecting on their high school years, missing the “good old days”, and expressing that to you. Rather than becoming annoyed, take it to heart. All too soon, it will become a reality for you, too. Having reached the midpoint of my senior year, I feel like I just stepped into BHS for the first time as a confused freshman. I have made beautiful memories in this place and anticipate making many more. Don't take yourself too seriously and laugh about the little things instead of letting them get to you. You'll thank yourself later for the stories you'll have to tell.

Get involved in the activities offered to you. Whether you are playing sports, singing in choir, being a super fan at sporting events, competing on the academic team or in speech and debate, there's something here for you. Make all the memories you can. Finding like-minded people is one of the biggest blessings I've ever received, and I wish that for you.

Be genuine. Don't tiptoe around people or gossip about others. Valuing people is one of the most influential and important things you can do. Love others well, and don't judge someone until you know his story and it came straight from his own mouth. Think the best of others, and if they prove you wrong, give them a second chance. We all need mercy sometimes.

The time you have here is a gift. Don't waste it searching for acceptance, short-lived glories, or even the love of your life. Learn to be content with this chapter of life rather than rushing to turn the page to the next. Be grateful for the here and now instead of waiting for and dreaming about the future. It will come soon enough, and if you don't embrace the present, you're going to have many regrets and missed opportunities.

I wish I had heard these things when I embarked on this journey. Take this advice to heart and make the next four years as wonderful as you can. Enjoy every minute of the great adventure that's ahead of you.