



Talking points

Here we provide the key sections of a short graduation speech for the parents and some verbiage that you can adapt to suit your event. It is best to personalize it with anecdotes and goals from your school.

Opening.

Today is a very special day for the children, parents and teachers here at [school name]. It's our [number] end of year ceremony/ graduation.

Every year, I love watching the kids get ready for the graduation. Such nachas. This isn't our first class to graduate. But each year is so wonderful all over again. It's similar to how we feel perhaps when we are about to have our second child. You just can't imagine how you can possibly love the next child as much as you loved your first. And then your child is born and of course the question is answered for you. And that's how I feel as I watched the children practice for this graduation. I looked at the children who will standing here on the stage, and each one of them is a unique gift. Each child is different and special in their own individual way. And it's incredible that each year we all fall in love with our new students and just get so much nachas from watching them grow.

Thank your families for sharing and entrusting their child(ren) with you.

We thank you for sharing your children with us. We thank you for allowing us to be part of your family during these most important years.

Each of your children are unique diamonds and we are so honored that you chose [school name] as your child's preschool.

It is very hard for me/us to believe your children are leaving us! You have entrusted the most important thing in your lives to us—your child. We can't tell you how much we appreciate that trust!

We will miss your children more than you know. But, we smile through the goodbye tears because we are so grateful to have been part of their lives and your family during these important years.

It has been our pleasure and privilege to be part these children's lives this year – to watch their personalities unfold day by day and marvel at this splendid miracle of development.

Show appreciation to staff & volunteers.

Name each teacher, support staff, parent, volunteer directly, add a personal anecdote about what each one has contributed to the school and children.

Just looking around, the happy smiling faces says so much about the environment here at [name] Preschool. It is a huge credit to the people in our school that the children love coming here to school and look forward to what they learn.

Thank you to the teachers here, the love you have for the children shines through in their results. Thank you to all the parents who have willingly given their time volunteering here, and who have raised such wonderful children!

To [whomever]: I am so lucky to have had [such wise counsel from you], and for [your vision] and all you did for [preschool] over the past few years. [creativity, dedication, talents, stepping in whenever needed, ideas, ...]



Today's celebration.

Today we celebrate YOUR children's life and times in preschool!

We have lived, loved, laughed, played, studied, learned, and enriched our lives together this year.

In these [nine] months of school, the children and staff have grown close, have become a part of each other, and we shall always retain a little of each other. We will be hanging their class picture in our [*Children's Hall of Stars*] so we can always remember them and their cute words and antics, and the learning and growth.

This is probably your child's first graduation. Your child will graduate again in the future and there will be important milestones. But this graduation is different. This preschool graduation is often thought of more of a celebration, and way to acknowledge this moment in time where the children are going onto the "big school". The children are excited because to them this is a chance to be in a show, to be the stars, to wear clothing they think of as grown up. Throughout the preparations to this big day, the children reflected on their experiences at [*preschool name*].

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This graduation is a celebration of potential. This is what makes this graduation so important.

I believe that for us adults/teachers and parents, this graduation is meaningful because the potential is greatest at this age, and a child this young can be potentially anything.

When it comes to high school or college graduations, we are celebrating a culmination of their work. They will have worked hard and then they receive a certificate acknowledging their accomplishments.

Here at our preschool graduation, we are celebrating the beginning... Let's celebrate this impressionable time, this time in our children's lives that we hold so dear.

What the children learned this year.

Talk about jokes from the classroom or a funny incident in the classroom. Field trips. Special days or visitors.

Seeing the big smiles on their faces in the morning is fantastic. They have learned to love learning and that skill will help them so much as they progress with their education.

Every day they come through these doors to play, paint, draw, build, dress-up, read, write, color, and learn through the power of play.

The children learned to count and also what counts, what matters. Through their play, they gained lots of experience in problem solving and collaborating and communicating, as well as patience and adaptability and tenacity.



We love these kids.

A famous wise man, Rabbi Chaninah, is quoted in the Talmud: "I learned a lot from my teachers, more from my friends, but most of all I learned from my students." So let me tell you about this particular class as a group of children and what we can learn from them.

There is a great old story/joke about Gold Meir. She was complaining to President Nixon about her job. Nixon said, "I have 250 million citizens to take care of, to answer to." And Goldie quipped back: "Aha, but I have 5 million prime ministers."

When you observe this group of children, you will see that this is a class of leaders - opinionated, sure of themselves, expressive and tenacious. Some louder than others, but when you watch their play closely you see that they all have their unique opinions and want them to be heard. This special quality has allowed the children the opportunity to really learn to negotiate, compromise and express their feelings.

This group of children, they know what they want and how they want it. It was amazing to see how they have gained the skills to work together and form friendships, to think and act empathetically towards each other. They work hard together and collaborate. They solve problems together and help each other. [add anecdotes] These are the important skills that we want our children to have and that will be of great benefit to them in the coming years of school.

Observing these children, interacting with them, has been an inspiration for us as teachers.

Focus on Power of Me.

See below.

About graduation.

A graduation is also called commencement, which means a beginning. In his many letters and addresses to graduates, the Rebbe always makes the point that the graduation is the just the end of one stage in the education process that leads to the beginning of the next stage. (This point is also emphasized when it comes to the conclusion of the Torah reading cycle, where we immediately begin reading it over again.) In that sense, one never really graduates from the education process as it is truly a lifelong experience. We are gratified for the opportunity to be part of your child's life in this stage and we do hope that we continue to be in touch.

About your alumni program.

Here is an opportunity to talk about your alumni program.

I'd like to say we are so happy that many of you will be returning next year and that we don't have to say lihitraot. And for those of you who are leaving, I want to share how much you have given our school, how much you have contributed to the success, the community that [school name] is today. We are so grateful. We hope to see you at our alumni events :).



Looking to the future.

Looking ahead, our children are very well-equipped to take on the next part of their educational lives. They have strong foundations and we feel very confident that we have given the children a great start in life. They have learned many priceless lessons.

Remember that we shall always be interested in your child and his destiny, wherever he goes, whatever he does, whoever he becomes. Please, please let us know through the years. We at Chabad are always here for anyone and everyone – especially the ones who have been a huge part of our lives this year.

So, children: Take on challenges, be loving, love learning, be part of the community, laugh and be all you can be.

And here are our stars themselves.

Today, we are celebrating a shechynau, the special time that these particular children will be graduating from preschool. The celebration was planned with the children. You'll get to hear and see many of the projects, ideas and songs that the children experienced all year long.

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Power of Me.

Share anecdotes and quips and quotes from the kids. Better yet, show through children's presentation or powerpoint of photos or video.

It is our hope for our dear students that they are grow to be happy and productive people in whatever they choose to do, that they tap into the power within themselves to be the capable and wonderful people they are meant to be. This year we focused on "Power of Me" to help the children become experienced in thinking and behaving with key character traits, like patience, adaptability, tenacity, self-regulation. A child who sees himself as adaptable and a problem solver will not be afraid to try new solutions to a problem. A child who learns that it takes effort to accomplish goals will be willing to put in the effort.

This year, we focused on the Power of Me, a social-emotional program. Throughout the year, through play and conversations, the children learned to look inside themselves to find their inner power that lives deep down and help themselves work through situations.

The 7 traits.

Self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to the ability to control thinking, behaviors, emotional reactions and social interactions to achieve goals or react appropriately to the situation – even if it is difficult to do so. *anecdote*

Adaptability. Adaptability refers to a person's initial response or reaction to new events, people and ideas.

Tenacity. Tenacity refers to that fierce blend of determination, persistence and grit. It is about being able to sustain your passions, and also work really hard at them, over really disappointingly long periods of time.

Patience. Patience refers to the ability to remain calm when dealing with a difficult or annoying situation, task, or person.

Problem Solving. Problem solving refers to the process or act of finding a solution to a problem.

Courage. Courage refers to the ability to do something difficult even when there's risk. It is the experience of being afraid but believing that something else is more important than your fear.

Responsibility. Responsibility refers to doing the things you are supposed to do and to accept the results of your actions.

Quotes.

"Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching them what counts is best." - Bob Talbert

"Teach a child how to think, not what to think." - Sidney Sugarman

"Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire." - William Butler Yeats
