



## Back To School Night Speech

By Brandon Bales '14

Good evening parents and families and welcome to the 2013-2014 Back to School Night. My name is Brandon Bales and I am a senior here at Cardinal Gibbons High School. As I begin my fourth year here, I can honestly say that this place has become like a second home to me. **Yes**, a home that has had some remodeling and renovations done on it, but a home nonetheless! (PAUSE)

You see, I have found that over the years Cardinal Gibbons has grown on me. Now I'm not sure that I can accurately describe what has caused a marvelous place like this to have such a profound influence on a simple-minded teenager like myself, but I think I can give it a try...

I have three older siblings who graduated from Gibbons a number of years ago, which meant three different Gibbons experiences. And so, as all great older siblings do, I was given an idea about what to expect. But though I was taking in all of their great advice, I was still dealing with the fact that I was entering into high school. As a freshman, my day-to-day high school experience consisted of a drop off at 7:45 followed by a pick up at 3:00. And I think I was alright with that, until near the end of my freshman year. At the time I was taking an English honors course, in which I had been struggling. My teacher had taken notice of my slipping grade and offered to help me out. I sat there in that English classroom for two full hours after school. I can remember being surprised that he had taken two hours out of his day to sit with me and help me

understand the elements of irony in Romeo and Juliet, and see how the themes in Lord of the Flies can be traced back to past events in history. That a teacher cared enough to prioritize me, his student, for those two hours, completely blew my mind. I think I really saw, then and there, how much a teacher could really care for his or her students and give them the opportunity to succeed.

So I thought to myself, “If they care for this school so much, then why can’t I?” But it took me a while to understand what that meant. Student council elections were coming up. In years past I had always thought about running, but the idea of getting up in front of people and being the **center of attention** never really inspired me. Looking back on it now, I’d say that’s a little ironic. (PAUSE)

But somehow, I mustered the strength to run for executive student council treasurer. I was a bit nervous about giving a speech, but I walked up to that podium, and gave it to the entire freshman, sophomore, and junior classes. When I finished, I remember getting a feeling that I had never felt before. I now know that it was the feeling of leadership. Of being able to have the courage to stand up and say what I thought was important about our school. A week later I found myself on the executive student council and getting involved in more things than I could have ever imagined. I was shocked at all of the opportunities available and I was ready to get involved and really be a major part of Gibbons. These opportunities allowed me to spend time with my friends, and make new ones along the way. By the time that Freshman Focus and freshman welcome day rolled around, I realized that all of these things I do...all of this leadership I am a part of...was not for me. It was all for the people around me. It wasn’t to heighten my experience as a student at Gibbons, but to heighten someone else’s. (PAUSE)

At freshman focus and freshman welcome day, I could see that everything I did impacted the freshmen. I was one of the first people that they met going into high school. And that’s the amazing thing about Gibbons. It allows you to be that leader. It doesn’t matter who you are, **if you**

**are willing**, you are given opportunities to be a leader and make a difference. If I could go back to myself freshman year and tell him one thing, I would tell him **to be willing** to take a chance to become someone greater than just an 8 to 3 student. I would make him realize what a great school Gibbons is, and how lucky he was, because I don't think he realized it. I'm now fully aware of how much Gibbons has impacted me, and I understand what a privilege it is to be a student here.

But through all of these experiences I have had, I can come down to one conclusion. One realization. I can see it from the seniors helping the freshman find their locker bay, to the teachers staying after class with their students just to catch up with them, to the alumni returning back on campus for the fall football games. There is something that each fellow member of Cardinal Gibbons holds in common. We are all not just a part of the Gibbons community, but rather we are all a part of the Cardinal Gibbons *family*. From the moment that your son or daughter steps foot onto the piazza in a white polo and khakis, and gives you that reassuring smile and a wave as they enter on the first day of high school, we all become a part of the Gibbons family. Look around you. The people beside you, in front of you, and behind you are all part of the Cardinal Gibbons family. I'm not saying that everything is going to be perfect in your Gibbons experience, but I don't think it is supposed to be.

**It's not the perfection that makes the Gibbons family what it is, but rather its realness and our willingness to make our family better.**

And just like a family, things may not always go according to plan, but that's okay. It is the fact that Gibbons can unite us together that makes it such a special place to be a part of.

We may be **faculty, students, parents, staff, athletes, musicians, coaches, or alumni**; but we are **united** as one family underneath the cross mounted on the archway of the main entrance. A family who is dedicated to ensuring this place forms all of us to be men and women of faith, service and leadership. (PAUSE)

Gibbons has given me the opportunity to grow into someone who I can be proud of. I know for sure that this school will allow your children to grow in the same ways I have, and give them the opportunity to make a difference. To leave their own unique mark on this school's legacy.

(PAUSE)

When the day comes that I have graduated, I don't think I'll ever really leave Cardinal Gibbons. Though I will be on my own, doing what I am to do with my life, my heart will still be painted in that Gibbons green and gold and I will always be a member of this Gibbons family. I can only hope that my actions today can benefit your children tomorrow and students for generations to come. And so, it is my pleasure to welcome each and every one of you to the 2013-2014 school year, and I wish you all nothing but the best in this year, and years to come. Thank you and Good Night.