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## Middle Bucks grads prepped for future

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By [Kyle Bagenstose](#) Staff Writer

Often, a student commencement speaker will look out over the sea of their peers and ponder what the future holds. They'll urge their fellow students to follow their dreams, and hold fast even in the face of adversity.

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A Middle Bucks Institute of Technology graduate cheers for his classmates as they receive their diplomas Thursday in Warminster

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And while the future surely holds plenty of mysteries for the 2014 graduates of the Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, student speaker Maya Grasty saw a group of young adults who had already taken the first steps into the next stage of life as she delivered her speech at William Tennent High School on Thursday night.

"As I look out at the graduates in front of me, I realize there are more than just graduates," Grasty said. "There are cosmetologists, plumbers, firefighters, nurses, automotive technicians, carpenters, and so many more."

Grasty herself is a prime example of a student who made the most of her time at Middle Bucks, which draws from the William Tennent, Central Bucks, New Hope-Solebury, and Council Rock districts, along with Archbishop Wood High School. A cosmetology student, Grasty is leaving Middle Bucks with a baricide certification and served as president of the Skills USA student government organization.

However, it's what Grasty plans to do next that has come to increasingly define a fundamental change in what was once referred to as Vo-Tech education. Like 68 percent of her Middle Bucks peers, Grasty will be heading to college next year, to pursue a degree in business and communications from Albright College in Reading.

School administrative director Kathryn Strouse touched on the growing importance of career and technical education in her welcoming remarks.

"Students entering the workforce tomorrow will be facing very different challenges than their vocational predecessors," Strouse said. "Globalization and emerging technologies are just two of the factor presenting challenges to upcoming workforce candidates ... (our) programs are poised to cultivate 21st century skills within today's youth."

The bright futures of many of the Middle Bucks students were on display from the start of the ceremony, as Building Trades Occupation student Patrick Doherty, who plans to enlist in the military following graduation, led the Pledge of Allegiance. Doherty was followed by Christina Croasdale, a cosmetology student who is already employed at a beauty salon, who sang the National Anthem.

Even the night's program, which highlighted the certifications received by each graduate, had been designed by Dena Cleary, a commercial art student.

Unlike a regular commencement that calls recipients to the stage alphabetically, the 264 graduates from Middle Bucks were instead called up by program. Starting with automotive collision technology and ending with welding, the students crossed the stage one by one to receive a certificate of program completion from the program instructor.

With students often being taught by the same instructor for several years, Grasty highlighted the importance of the Middle Bucks staff.

"We all started out as little seedlings in the hands of our teachers, and it was up to the effort that we gave and the dedication that they had to help us grow," Grasty said, before offering a quote from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, former president of Turkey. "A good teacher is like a candle; it consumes itself to light the way for others."

Fitting with the ethos of a determined student, Grasty downplayed the importance of graduation, and urged her classmates to continually push themselves to improve.

"Graduation is only a concept. In real life, every day you graduate," Grasty said. "From a child, to a teen, to a young adult. Graduation is a process that goes on until the last day of your life. If you can grasp that, it'll make a world of difference."

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