

Too Many Graduations

By Shawnta S. Barnes - June 5, 2017



Depending on the school's calendar, May or June marks the end of the school year and the time to celebrate graduates. When someone states they are attending a graduation, you can no longer assume it's for a high school graduate or a college graduate. My former colleague Veeta Jackson said, "Kids graduate from everything these days – infant room to toddler room, pre-k, kindergarten, 5th grade, 8th grade, so by the time they get to their senior year, they've graduated like six times!" Are all these graduations necessary?

My twin sons completed kindergarten at the end of May. The kindergarten teachers sent home a letter stating the school was not having a kindergarten graduation. Instead, they had an end of the year program. The program consisted of the students singing songs about the different seasons and holidays, a picture slideshow, and popsicles on the playground. My husband and I had to take off work to attend since it took place during the school day. Although the program was not as big of an event as a kindergarten graduation, I still questioned if it was needed. One of my sons was in the front row and dead center. He quit singing and stopped doing the choreography and decided to sit down on the riser during two of the songs in the middle of the program. We took off work to watch one not participate in the whole program, and our other son was in the back which made him hard to see.

Even though our sons' school offered a program instead of a graduation, all parents were not content with this decision. One parent decided to organize a graduation outside of the school. Below, is an excerpt of the letter sent to parents and teachers.

Dear Parents and Teachers,

I will be hosting a graduation ceremony for the kindergarten children who are graduating this year. If your child is not graduating s/he is more than welcome to come. We will still have many fun-filled activities for the children. There will be lots of things for kids to do including a bounce house. Once I receive RSVPs, I will send additional information. If you want to add any pictures to the brochure, please send via email or through your student. This event is free!!!

My children did not attend this event. I believe we are creating a culture of children who expect to be celebrated all the time for everything — being praised for doing what is expected. Unfortunately, I do not expect the trend to go away any time soon when companies are benefiting. The author of the article, “Pomp as students finish elementary school. But is it a real graduation?” pointed out the amount of revenue generated from graduations of younger students. ““It’s the fastest-growing area of our business,” said Richard Spear, owner of American Cap and Gown in New Jersey. Sales of the smallest caps and the shortest gowns to elementary schools and kindergartens account for nearly half of his nearly \$1 million in annual revenue, he said.”

Completing each grade is a significant accomplishment because each finished grade is another step closer to high school graduation. When the school year ends, and it is not senior year, teachers can send home a portfolio of work and students can participate in activities within their classroom or with their grade level to end the school year. Before senior year, additional graduation ceremonies are not necessary.