

# OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

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## HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Happy October, everyone! This month, our seniors are taking a moment to look back on their journeys and reflect on how far they've come since freshman year. High school is more than just classes and grades; it's a time of finding out who we truly are. For this edition, seniors shared messages to their freshman selves or reflections on how they've evolved throughout these four years. And because it wouldn't be October without a little fun, some of us included some Halloween memories with photos of seniors in their favorite costumes, past or present!



Growth is  
uncomfortable  
*because*

you've never been there  
before.

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**Alex Andon-Barrera**

*My message to my freshman self would be not to close myself off and to let people in. I say this because back then, I thought keeping to myself was the safest option — that avoiding people meant avoiding problems. But I've learned that the best memories and lessons in high school come from the people you meet and the connections you make. Not everyone is meant to stay, but every person teaches you something, and that's how you grow.*

**Niko Hamilton**

*Throughout high school, I've grown tremendously both academically and personally. I've learned how to manage my time better, balancing schoolwork, extracurriculars, and social life more effectively than I ever could before. My confidence has also improved. I'm more comfortable speaking up in class, sharing ideas, and taking on leadership roles. I've become more resilient, too, learning to handle setbacks and stress with a more positive mindset. Overall, high school has helped shape me into a more mature, self-aware, and goal-driven individual.*

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### **Sadie Keogh**

*Dear Freshman Me,*

*Don't give up! You're going to encounter so many challenges and setbacks you would've never thought you would have to face, but you will overcome them. You will stay focused on your academics and extracurriculars to set yourself up for success. Remember to have fun too. It's all about balance. The people you choose to surround yourself with are a reflection of who you are. Surround yourself with people who challenge you, lift you, and have goals. You are going to go far. Don't stop dreaming big!*



### **Anne Canale**

*My message to my freshman self would be to get involved early—join as many clubs and activities as possible. I didn't participate in any extracurriculars during my freshman year, and now that I'm filling out college applications, I really regret it. I'd also tell myself to be more outgoing and make an effort to get to know more people. Don't be afraid to try new things or step outside your comfort zone; those experiences help you grow the most. Time goes by faster than you think, so make the most of every opportunity while you can. I've learned to take initiative instead of waiting for opportunities to come to me. I've become more confident, more social, and more open to new experiences. I've realized that growth comes from pushing yourself to try new things, even when it feels scary at first.*

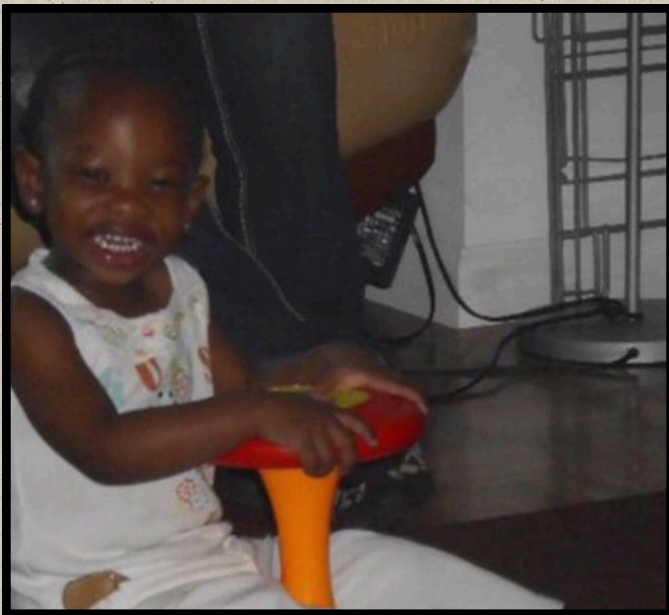


### **Riyah Thomas**

*If I could tell my freshman self anything, it would be to focus on myself and not what anyone feels about me. Get to know yourself and don't cater to other people's feelings and expectations of you or how you should act. Confidence is not only about the way you look but also how you feel, act, and look! To be the best version of yourself is to be better than who you were yesterday, not to try and compete with others. Don't spend your time worrying about how to perfect because you already are! Make new friends, don't focus on the old ones, and live your life to the fullest. One thing I've learned over these 4 years is that you have to be confident in everything you do because it is easy to crack under pressure.*







### **Alera Wilcox**

*My message to my freshman self would be that everything will be okay. I know that's pretty general, and everyone says things like that, but for me, I truly needed nothing but that sentence said to me back then. I went through a lot of my freshman year. I came in hopeful and excited to begin my high school career, but nearing the end of the year is when things took a toll. My brother unfortunately passed away. And the funny thing is, I didn't even know him. Like, yes, I saw him a couple of times when I was a baby and was told a bunch of stories about his life, but that was it. I never got the chance to really meet him or truly know him. I went to the funeral, saw his face, and even though it hurt me, I knew that if he were here now, based on what I knew about him and how he felt about me, he would definitely tell me that things would be okay. And I can definitely now say that it turned out to be okay.*



### **Anyis Burman**

*To see myself through someone else's eyes as I went through high school would be a dream, but to feel my own evolution through high school is amazing. Since freshman year, I felt a shift in my life. Energy-wise and physically, I have evolved into this strong, outgoing person with a stronger passion for things and life itself. I remember when I was extremely shy and never wanted to talk to anyone. Very anti-social, but now I look back at myself as I have grown into it, and I get so impressed with myself all the time. I just have to smile and feel proud of myself. Every day when I wake up, I feel this sense of accomplishment and pride as to who I have become, and every day I get to continue to keep going and learn and change in many ways I never thought I could.*

### **Jae Clarke**

*Continue doing you. You will find yourself and find out what you truly want to be. Don't let anyone dim your light and tell you what you should and should not be doing. Continue going with your gut. Stop hanging around people who are not benefiting you and helping you out. Focus on yourself and your grades because that will impact your future.*

### **Daniel Martinez**

*To be honest, I don't really regret anything I've ever done. Because it made me who I am today. But a message I would give freshman year me is to keep going, keep pushing, and learn to love yourself. I would say I have matured a lot and learned a lot throughout my years in high school. And I definitely changed, completely. I would also say I am way more responsible than before.*







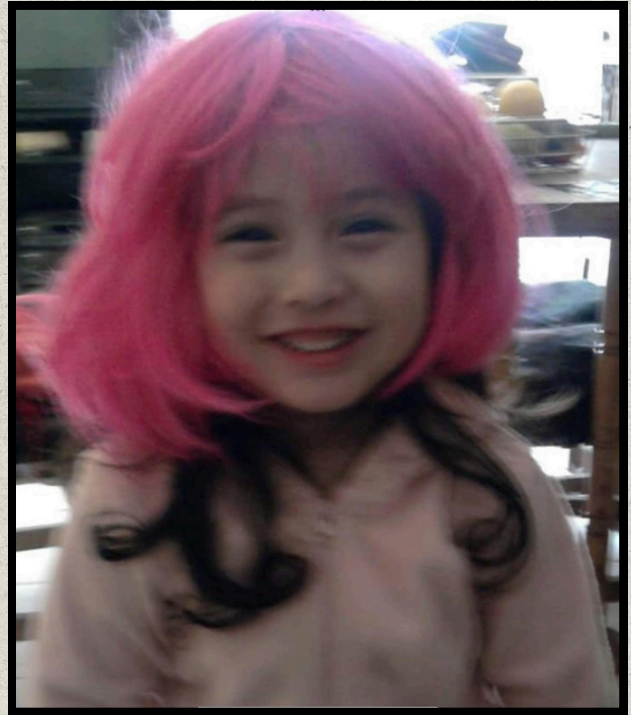
### **Zara Rosario**

*Throughout my time here at HSFI, I believe I have become more determined, responsible, levelheaded, and a leader. I believe this for myself, as when I was in middle school, I was just passing my classes, not caring about my work, but when I was a freshman here, I really started to put in the work and effort to bring my grades up. Now, instead of getting a 67 GPA, I am getting a GPA of 90 and above. As for the leadership part, I have participated in Equity and emotions since my sophomore year, junior year, I was a part of SGO, and now I am the captain of the So Fly Step Team.*



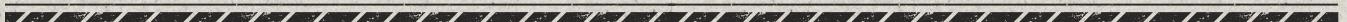
### **Summer Otano**

*A message I have for my freshman self is to stop focusing on unnecessary things that are going to stress me out or that aren't going towards my life goals. I also believe I became better at school because I participated more, I have outstanding grades, and I became a responsible young woman.*



### **Nadja Figueroa**

*To my freshman self, I would tell her that the high school journey will be hard. To start managing her time more wisely and understand time management better. I would tell myself to take things slow and go at my own pace. I would also tell myself to take care of my mental health and make choices based on what I think is best for me.*





**Saharrah Martin**

*A message I have for my freshman self is to have patience and grace with myself. I feel like I wanted everything to happen fast and to understand my life, but it didn't happen like that. So I would tell myself not to worry too much because great things will happen to me. I have evolved a lot through high school. I talk to my peers more, I am more responsible, and I feel like I know a lot more about myself too.*

**Sierrah Martin**

*A message I would give to my freshman self is to not be too hard on myself, have fun, and make a few more friends. I think that I am better at schoolwork and balancing my time with school and fun. I am also more involved in school than freshman year.*

**Mikaela Cabral**

*To little me, I know you'd write some dirty stuff about big you, but I wanted to write to say I know you don't think things will work out. And I know the years to come will be hard, but just know you'll get through it. You're a tough girl. Always have been. Don't let those dark thoughts cloud your mind. Chase your dream, Mickey!*







### **Jewel Rivers**

*Stick. To. Your. Plan. You have to stay focused. No one is going to push you, so you have to do it yourself. You don't owe anyone anything. On a more positive note, I'm very proud of us. We have overcome so much that we didn't think we would get through. Continue to be your own biggest critic and biggest supporter. Continue to advocate for yourself and work hard for what you want. Dreams do come true, and many doors will open if you put your best foot forward in any situation. Put yourself first and love yourself (no, you're not selfish). Everyone isn't for you, and you aren't for everyone; that's okay. One day, all of this will be worth it, trust me. Be you.*



### **Marlo Rivera-Opalski**

*If I could write a message to my freshman year self, I would tell her that she's doing great and everything will work out. I would say to her that I'm proud of her and that her commitment to living to the fullest has really worked out. I would tell her not to get too stressed about little things because, in the end, it never really matters. I would remind her that life will get in the way, and not everything is always smooth sailing, but these experiences will make her who she is today. Also, high school REALLY does fly by, and everyone who told her that was NOT lying, so make sure to really make it last. I would be most excited to tell her that her dream of traveling has already begun, and she has already been to 4 different countries in Europe!!*



### **Lismarie Varela**

*At the beginning of High School, I remember myself as sort of carefree. I worried about things day to day, and never truly bothered thinking ahead. The future seemed so far away that it all felt impossible. The biggest change I experienced has been becoming independent in more ways than one. Whether it be setting high standards for myself or uplifting myself, I've finally been confident enough to truly do it myself and for myself. Not depending on the expectations of others has finally allowed me to really create some of my own, to really, truly want a future for myself, undeterred by the people I've grown up around.*





**Lena Nelson**

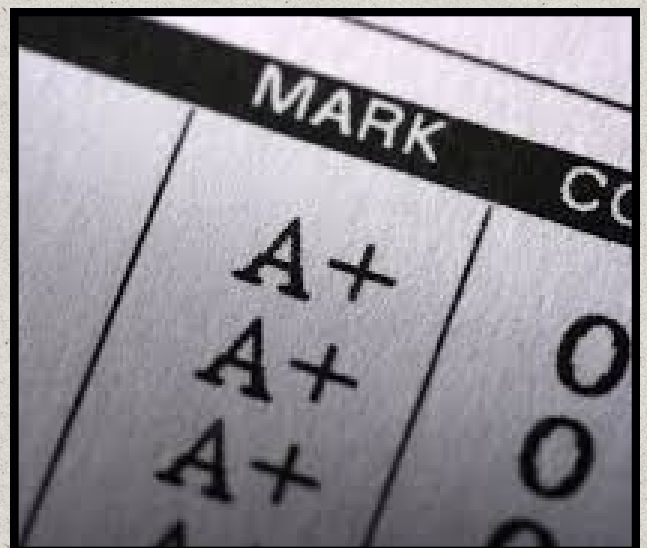
*My message to my freshman self is that you don't always need a large group of friends to make you feel like you're a loner. You have the potential to expand your creativity other than art with such a big imagination, such as yours. You're also gonna find someone who loves you and embraces your crazy personality. It might not be sooner than you think, it could be later on in life, just try to overcome every obstacle before that happens. As for the achievements, I was in the modeling club for my sophomore and junior years. Performing in a lot of shows at the school, advocating for denim day, doing a few internships, and being a Youth Leader during my sophomore year. Now I'm currently in Black Student Union club, hoping to get into an HBCU so I can major in marketing.*

**Khadidja Diakite**

*A message to my freshman self is that things don't get easier, but it's the way you handle your situations. I fondly knew what you'd become, a young businesswoman and high school apprentice. I wanted to say that to get something, you have to go get it because no opportunity comes to you without you having to put in work. So continue to take those chances because they might lead to a great outcome. Over the years, I became a more professional student, and I am more expressive. I love to take my chances because if you don't take the risk, then you will never know the results.*

**Lisbelle Bonilla**

*A message to my freshman self is to be okay with not everybody being for you, and what matters is to focus on what you have to do and not to let anything distract you from your goals. And how I've evolved throughout high school is by re-establishing my priorities and getting myself right with grades, school, and just everything else in my day-to-day life.*





**Dominique Kennedy**

*My message for my freshman self is to not be shy or anxious because you have a lot of great things coming up and lots of opportunities. Also, get more involved in things you are interested in. I have evolved a lot throughout the years. Freshman year, I was a little shy, but I opened up in the middle of it. Sophomore year, I socialized a lot more, made new friends, and loved my teachers. Junior year, I was the same, but I learned some things about myself, and now senior year, I am my "perfect" version of myself, but not literally, because I don't think I have to change anything this year.*

**Dahia Martinez**

*I am sure little me will be shocked but happy to see where I turned out to be. Not like the blonde girls in the magazines, but like my own unique self.*

**Gabriella Lucero**

*To my freshman self, you won't regret the change you have committed to going through. Don't worry about what people say or think. There are so many things to appreciate in life, and where you are right now will not matter later. Your next stop will change things for the better. I wish I could go back and be involved somehow but now I really am. I regret some of the actions I had done in the past but good things will come your way. You will keep growing day by day, little by little. Your best friend is still here and going stronger up to 4 years now. We had our ups and downs but have grown and matured a lot. You had an experience at NYU, FIT! You would be surprised of what you were able to accomplish. Your major has taught you well. You've taken college courses, and have been able to lead other freshmen. You don't need to worry about other people. Don't be afraid of being yourself even if you can't point to who you are. We're still learning to feel better but know that you are beautiful and intelligent. Don't let your thoughts say otherwise. You will experience things you never thought of and it's okay to go through change. Let it happen.*

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*Photo from a presentation by BANG Cookies*

As we celebrate the changing seasons and the spirit of reflection, let's take a moment to appreciate how each experience, whether a challenge or a moment of happiness, has shaped who we are as seniors. The Class of 2026 stands as a reminder that growth takes time, courage, and heart. Forever Love Yourself — a simple message to carry with you as we move forward. We hope this edition encourages everyone to look back with gratitude and ahead with anticipation for what's to come. Here's to making the most of our final fall together and to all the memories still waiting to be made. Happy October, everyone!

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