Students: Please give this to **two** people you respect and whose words would mean the most to you in the coming years when you are out there on your own and wish you had someone to turn to for such advice and wisdom as this person will offer in their letter.

**The Polonius Letter: Advice for the Departing Young Adult**

AP English

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­­­ \_\_\_\_:

We are just now beginning to read *Hamlet* in our Senior English class. Early in the play, a father (Polonius) offers advice to his son (Laertes), who is about to leave home for France. He tells him, among other things, to never borrow or lend money, to be very careful in his choice of friends, to listen well to the opinions of others but to speak his own sparingly, to avoid wasting his money on flashy clothes, and, above all, to always follow his heart. (I have included Shakespeare’s original text as well as a modern translation).

I would like to offer you the same opportunity to share your thoughts with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­­­ as they prepare to graduate and move on to something bigger than BCHS in a few short months. How do you feel about this moment in time? Are there values you would like them to remember as they head off into the world? Are there lessons you have learned in life that you wish to impart to them? In short, do you have any advice for them that you think will help them find happiness and success in both school and the adult world?

My purpose here is twofold: to personalize students’ experience of the play and to give you a chance to remind this student of the lessons you want him/her to learn, the values you want them to possess and any other thoughts you would like to share with them.

Please **seal your letters in an envelope** and **give it to your student to bring to class by next Thursday, April 2**. The letter will be opened in class the following week.

NOTE: Students will not be forced to reveal the contents of the letter under *any* circumstances! This is a private letter which will not be read to the class nor that I will read (unless the student wants to share it). Should they wish to share their reactions, however, they will be able to do so.

If you have questions, or if you would prefer, you may e-mail the letter to me at [tricia.mckenny@bourbon.kyschools.us](mailto:tricia.mckenny@bourbon.kyschools.us) and I will place it in an envelope for the student.

Thank you very much, in advance, for your participation in what I hope will be a special moment for this student.

Sincerely,

Tricia McKenny

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| **Original Text** | **Modern Text** |
| **POLONIUS**  Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!  The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail  And you are stayed for. There, my blessing with thee.  And these few precepts in thy memory  Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,  Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar.  Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,  But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware  Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,  Bear ’t that th' opposèd may beware of thee.  Give every man thy ear but few thy voice.  Take each man’s censure but reserve thy judgment.  Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  But not expressed in fancy—rich, not gaudy,  For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  And they in France of the best rank and station  Are of a most select and generous chief in that.  Neither a borrower nor a lender be,  For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  This above all: to thine own self be true,  And it must follow, as the night the day,  Thou canst not then be false to any man.  Farewell. My blessing season this in thee. | **POLONIUS**  You’re still here? Shame on you—get on board! The wind is filling your ship’s sail, and they’re waiting for you. Here, I give you my blessing again. And just try to remember a few rules of life. Don’t say what you’re thinking, and don’t be too quick to act on what you think.  Be friendly to people but don’t overdo it.  Once you’ve tested out your friends and found them trustworthy, hold onto them.  But don’t waste your time shaking hands with every new guy you meet. Don’t be quick to pick a fight, but once you’re in one,  hold your own.  Listen to many people, but talk to few.  Hear everyone’s opinion, but reserve your judgment. Spend all you can afford on clothes, but make sure they’re quality, not flashy,  since clothes make the man—  which is doubly true in France.  Don’t borrow money and don’t lend it, since when you lend to a friend, you often lose the friendship as well as the money,  and borrowing turns a person into a spendthrift. And, above all, be true to yourself.  Then you won’t be false to anybody else. Good-bye, son. I hope my blessing will help you absorb what I’ve said. |