



High School Graduation

June 10, 2018

Speech by Alexander Hewlett, Class of 2018

[Wait for tumultuous applause and screams of “We love you, Alexander!” to die down while respectfully acknowledging the adoration of the masses. A head nod, a brisk wave to display control but cordiality with the crowd.]

Hey everybody! I had a long speech all written out, but I personally think it's more important to be spontaneous. [Rip up paper and throw behind back. Pull out new script.] Anyways, where was I . . . let me see . . . more important to be spontaneous . . . rip up paper and throw behind back . . . there we go!

Thank you all for coming out here to celebrate the graduating class of 2018! [To seniors] We did it! We finally made it. We have reached the end of our grueling journey through the unforgiving years of high school. Casting a glance backwards we see that seemingly insurmountable obstacles blocked our path: College applications. Senior Papers. AP exams for classes that we may or may not regret taking. Senior Quest approval forms (I never turned mine in). Prom Drama. As the year progressed, overwhelming stress reared its ugly head around every corner, and many L's were taken. Responsibilities were shirked. Tests were failed. Tears were shed. Although it was difficult, we met the challenges, we made our choices, and for better or for worse, here we are, standing before you at the brink of the next step in our journey.

Before I go any further, I'd like to thank a few people for getting me to this point. A big thank you to my family for supporting me all these years, and to Laura Rosberg and Will Ley for making my ten seasons of theater the best days of my life.

Anyways, there are three things I hate to see in speeches. [Walk away from podium.] 1. Absence of movement, [Possibly sit on edge of stage.] 2. no risk taking, and 3. A distinct lack of audience participation. So what makes GDS so great? It's not rhetorical, people, I need to see some hands. I feel like a teacher. [Make a bit out of it.] I think it's the people. [Make way back to podium] Any school, business, or organization draws its personality and merits from the

community it's built upon. GDS is therefore lucky to have housed this senior grade for four years. Sure, we haven't always been the easiest grade to deal with, what with our occasional deviations from what is [Hit those air quotes hard my dude] "consistent with GDS Norms" or "allowed", but our rambunctious energy is part of what makes this grade so endearing. Without our crazy hijinks, what would GDS even be? Without the personality and liviness that the students provide, GDS would just be a place to learn about triangles and WWII. I like to believe that our humble efforts to bring some levity to the halls of GDS has made our beloved school a place where students can look forward to fun as well as learning.

However, our jovial nature as a grade doesn't prevent us from getting serious when we want to. In fact, what has impressed me most about my classmates is the magnitude of their passion and compassion. Let's begin with the first: Passion. The diversity of interests in the senior grade is impressive, but what is inspirational is the amount of time, effort, and dedication that I've seen the seniors pour into what they love. Our commitment to sports, theater, academics, clubs, affinity groups, and so much more exemplifies our desire to live life to the fullest, and hopefully inspires the youngsters of GDS to do the same. Some of us want to be mathematicians. Some of us want to be musicians. Some of us want to go to space. Some of us want to run track, some of us want to sing, and some of us just want to run a dance studio / smoothie bar, I don't judge.

On a more serious note, as we gaze into the murky, obscure future, we find that our resolve in our passions may waver. GDS provided an excellent medium for us to explore our interests, but as we leave this place, doubts may begin to form. Are we sure of what we want to do? What if our interests change? Where do we have to draw the line between chasing our dreams and facing reality? Sorry for the dark mood change. These fears have dogged me and many others this year, and I personally would have been dragged down by them if it hadn't been for the best quality of the class of 2018: compassion.

This grade's compassion for each other, the community, and the outside world is what I hope we will be remembered for. High school is a crucially formative time, as we grapple with our identities, the uncertainty of the future, and our own personal struggles. What every human being needs is someone they can turn to and trust, someone who will give you a hug when you're down, and tell you "I believe in you! You got this!" Fortunately for us we've had 125 people just like that. I know, I know, I was gonna write a funny speech, but I can't help but get a

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little sentimental when I think of just how much love and care the seniors have extended to each other. The seniors have provided unanimous acceptance and support of their peers, something I will never, ever take for granted. Between the moment we entered this school to the moment we walked onto this stage, we have experienced many hardships, many setbacks, and many defeats, but we've always had each other to rely on, and I will miss that the most.

As we branch out to new communities, let us never forget our roots here, to the students and staff of GDS, to those who helped us and to those we helped. [Turn to seniors if possible] Over my four years, I'd been uncertain of who I was, and what I wanted to be. Now, inspired by your dedication to doing what you love, and bastioned by the overflowing compassion that welcomed me every day when I walked into school, I am ready to face the next stage of my life. It's painful to say goodbye. I owe you a debt that is beyond my capacity to pay. All I can say is, thank you. I couldn't have done it without you. [Turn back]

That said, not all of us feel ready to face the future. Those old fears taunt us, the greatest perhaps, the question: What if I fail? There is a philosophy that I have taken to heart, learned from a wise woman of this grade who has single handedly kept me from falling apart this year, you know who you are. This philosophy has helped me ease this fear of failure, and I hope it can do the same for you all. It is as follows: As long as you are chasing your dreams, committing yourself to living your life the way that you want to, and prioritizing doing what makes you happy, you are succeeding. It may take you years for you to get exactly where you want to be, but stick with it; you have your whole life to make it work. Even the edgy nihilist Samuel Beckett has some words to share on the topic. They go: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." Here's what I take from that. Now matter what path we take, we'll hit bumps. But failure isn't permanent. So don't let setbacks kill your dreams. Work hard, chase them down, and then live the hell outta them.

Now, before I go, I have some final requests for the seniors. Unapologetically live as yourself, extend a hand to those in need, and don't be afraid to let someone help you, 'cause it just might change your life. Never lose hope, never lose the flame that makes you shine so brightly. Sometimes we get so busy we forget to be happy, so always, always, find time to smile. I wanna give you all a big hug right here, but given my wingspan I'll settle for being indescribably proud of how far we have come, and how far we will go. I love each and every one of you. When you guys are all famous, don't forget the little guy that stood up here, on a footstool, and wished you

all the best. Let's get out there and change the world.

WELL! Thank you for accompanying me through this emotional-rollercoaster of a speech! Time flies when you're having fun, and all too soon it's time to say goodbye. Ladies and gentlemen, they changed my life, I'm lucky to have known them, the world will be privileged to receive them, I present to you the class of 2018!

[Cry a bunch I guess]

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