

## **Commencement Speech Guidelines 2026**

Our 2026 Commencement Ceremony, to be held on May 31, 2026, will include one student speech.

### ***The Theme of the Speech is one of Inspiration***

The purpose of this speech is to connect graduating seniors and provide them with an opportunity to look ahead. This “forward looking” speech focuses on life beyond New Trier and how your New Trier experiences have prepared you for the future. The speech may not be more than five minutes in length. Successful speeches tend to stick close to the 5-minute mark.

Successful speakers are often storytellers, using poignant, funny, surprising, or other emotional examples to connect with their audience. The Commencement Speaker should speak from their own New Trier experiences and be inclusive of their peers' experiences; the successful speech will make every student feel included. This is an important balance to strike. A few personal examples help others relate to your speech, but an entire speech on your personal experience is not relatable. Similarly, an entire speech based on generalities or inspirational quotes has difficulty connecting with the audience. Don't be afraid to use a little humor to speak to the unique experiences of your class. Please also remember to consider families, guardians, grandparents, and siblings when developing your speech. Students should make sure to practice their speech aloud before submitting it for consideration, concentrating on delivery as well as content. A particular focus or theme works better than general platitudes. Ted Talks are great examples of short, focused speeches that can appeal to wide audiences. You can also view past years NT student commencement speeches on our [website](#). Please reference the Commencement Speaker Rubric that the committee will use to score each applicant.

### **Application Process**

- Speeches must be emailed to Mrs. Rasch **April 7 by 3:45 p.m.** [rascha@nthsh.net](mailto:rascha@nthsh.net)
- Selected students will be contacted via email to present their speech to a committee that includes students, staff, and administration. This committee will determine the Commencement Speaker.
- The chosen Commencement Speaker will be notified and may be asked to make revisions. The speaker will work with the Music & Theatre Department to rehearse the speech prior to Commencement.
- The speaker may not revise speech after final approval.
- Students with questions, please contact Mrs. Rasch at [rascha@nthsh.net](mailto:rascha@nthsh.net)

## Commencement Speaker Rubric

<u>Written Speech Rubric</u>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Speech Organization</b> <i>The speech has an intro/thesis, conclusion, and supporting paragraphs.</i>				
<b>New Trier Connection</b> <i>The speech emulates New Trier ideals, memories, and spirit.</i>				
<b>Parent Relatability</b> <i>The speech has the potential to engage parents and relatives.</i>				
<b>Student Relatability</b> <i>The speech has the potential to engage students and teens.</i>				
<b>Speech Readiness</b> <i>The speech has the polish to be easily edited or does not require major edits.</i>				
<b>Notes</b>				

<u>Application/Presentation Rubric</u>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Vocal Delivery</b> <i>The speaker demonstrates adept use of articulation, inflection, and pacing.</i>				
<b>Nonverbal Communication</b> <i>The speaker demonstrates the physical poise, expression, and gravitas.</i>				
<b>Audience Engagement</b> <i>The speaker attempts to/has points that engage the audience.</i>				
<b>Performance Readiness</b> <i>The speaker has the skills to perform and/or to improve their delivery.</i>				
<b>Energy and Enthusiasm</b> <i>The speaker shows a positive, energized image.</i>				
<b>Notes</b>				