



High School Graduation

June 8, 2025

Speech by Yom Fox, High School Principal

Good afternoon, everyone.

This year's senior theme was *25 and Drive*— before we run out of road, ride with me one more time. Let me take you for one last spin before we hand you the keys. So buckle **up!**

🎵 Cue: *"Drivers License"*

Before arriving at Columbia, my friend Rel and I drove from Denver to New York City in a sea-foam green Dodge Neon named Rambo. Armed with blind faith, MapQuest printouts, and AAA maps, we passed 942 cornfields, ate our body weight in snacks, and by the end, considered careers in stunt driving—or NASCAR. Somewhere between Colorado and New York, between the emotions of driving towards the unknown, I learned two truths: 1) Progress isn't always measured by how fast you're going (*thanks, Iowa State Trooper You Know Who You Are, for that tip*). 2) That progress can mean tapping someone else to take the wheel while you sit shotgun.

In the end, the road trip can remind you that you were on the right track all along.

To the Class of 2025,

Before you leave college or at least, before you become a well-adjusted 40-something year-old, experience a road trip.

And I don't mean the pre-planned, everything-goes-right kind of trip. I mean a *real* road trip—the kind where you *think* you have enough money in the bank for gas (but maybe don't), the snacks are questionable, the playlist is half chaos, the accommodations are... let's call them "rustic," and yet the detours—well, they turn out to be the best **part**.

🎵 Cue: *"Shut Up and Drive"*

Because the road trip isn't just a rite of passage—it's a metaphor for something much deeper: the journey to finding your purpose.

At GDS, you've learned how to ask questions when the map guidance doesn't align with what

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you know to be true. You've learned to plan, to *navigate*... how to take stock of where you are and plan a route forward. —and you also recognize that forward means beyond Davenport and Ellicott Streets.

You've learned something even more powerful: how not to shy away from the road not yet driven.

To pause at the unexpected fork.

To trust that there's more than one way to get where you're going.

To see who you are sharing the road with

To take the detour for a closer look or a new perspective.

And that takes something we've tried to nurture in you: *curiosity*.

Curiosity to ask, "*What if?*"

Curiosity to slow down when others are speeding ahead.

Curiosity to pull over, get out, and see the view for **yourself**.

🎵 Cue: "*Road to Nowhere*"

Because sometimes... the detour *makes the road trip*

You also learn a lot about the people in the car with you.

How to share the road—and the silence.

How to laugh through a traffic jam.

How to find your way when the map—or the GPS—makes no sense.

And somewhere in there, you become a newer version of who you once were.

Now, parents and caregivers: There may have been times when you looked at your child and **thought**

🎵 Cue: "*Hit the Road Jack*"

... but now that that moment has come, let's be real—it's also a little **bit of**...

🎵 Cue: "*I Most Wanted*" – Beyoncé & Miley Cyrus

It's been a journey for you— for us, too. You've been riding shotgun all this time—co-pilot, navigator, fuel-funder, snack-provider. And now it's time to trust that these not-so-little ones have been paying attention.

That they know *who they are* and

have a sense of *who they want to be* on this next stretch of road.

And maybe now you can *finally* exhale **and say**:

🎵 Cue: “*Drive My Car*”

To the graduates: You don’t have to figure it out all at once.. Over time and through the twists & turns you will get **there**.

🎵 Cue: “*Everyday Is a Winding Road*” – Sheryl Crow

It’s the quiet moments, the unexpected ones, magical, in-between ones—that make your journey **matter**.

🎵 Cue: “*Life is a Highway*” – Tom Cochrane

So, Class of 2025—take the wheel.

Chase purpose, not perfection.

Let curiosity be your compass.

And when your route eludes you for a moment, trust that you’ve got what it takes to find your way.

We’ll be here in the rearview, cheering **you on**.

🎵 Cue Home by Phillip Phillips