



# North Cross School

## COMMENCEMENT REMARKS

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Good morning. It is an honor and a privilege to be here today, and I would like to thank all of the teachers, friends, parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and everyone else present. I know making it to this day would not have been possible without all of you and your support. Today, graduation, marks such an important milestone in all of our lives. To put it in a very trite way, it marks an end and a beginning. However, for me and for all of these amazing people sitting behind me, it signifies even more than that. It is a day to celebrate what we have done, to recognize the resilience and endurance it took to get here, and to look forward to the future. It is also a day to give accolades to all those who helped us get here. When I was thinking about what I wanted to say today, there were so many things that came to mind. Many of them were quotes that I thought captured the significance of today and the brightness of the future ahead of us. I was searching for a creative way to present these quotes. In recognition of David Letterman's recent finale show, I decided I would do a top 10 quotes for the North Cross graduation of 2015.

**Number Ten:** "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Eleanor Roosevelt. As we leave this campus here on the corner of Colonial Avenue and Electric Road in the Star City, we all have different ideas about what we want to study and achieve. I know a lot of us here have dreams, dreams to play in the Olympics, dreams to discover cures, dreams to travel and make change, and so much more. So let us vow to continue to dream big and to refuse to forget our dreams as we embark on the next chapter in our lives.

**Number Nine:** "A good school teaches you resilience - that ability to bounce back." Kate Reardon. When we were in the lower school, Ms. Holt would work to instill values she thought would serve us well in life. One of these values was resilience. In the fourth grade, we had to memorize the poem *If* by Rudyard Kipling, a poem that is all about resilience and facing adversity. "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, if you can dream- and not make dreams your master, If you can think- and not make thoughts your aim, If you can meet with Triumph and disaster..." This is just one of the many examples of how the teachers here, like Ms. Holt and Mrs. Lawrence, care well beyond their year or years of having us in the classroom to teach us values we will need.

**Number Eight:** "It's fine to celebrate success, but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure." Bill Gates. I believe this is a quote for the future. Of course many of us have experienced failures of some sort, like I know many of us sitting up here could say that we did not do so well on a quiz or two in U.S. history with Mr. Cook. Occasionally that failure has been an effective motivator. Without failure, the field hockey team could not have made it to the number two spot in the state. Throughout sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades we lost game after game, some games with no goals, losing 11 or 12 to 0. However, this failure motivated us to work. We worked and practiced weekend after weekend, and today we hold the number two

position in the state and the number one in our conference. There will undoubtedly be successes and failures for all of us in the future, and this quote reminds us not to forget the importance of learning from the failures.

**Number Seven:** “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” Martin Luther King Jr. Here at North Cross, efforts have been placed not just on our education inside the classroom, but on our character and the people we become. We fundraise and contribute to other sports teams, to Eagle Scout projects, and to those in need, whether it be a person living in Roanoke battling cancer or people in Nepal. A great emphasis here at North Cross is placed on community and character, and this will undoubtedly serve us in the future.

**Number Six:** “The business of life is the acquisition of memories. In the end, that’s all there is.” This quote is said by the character Carson in the show *Downton Abbey*. Leaving this day we will all have different memories from our time here at North Cross. Most likely we will forget the plaid skirts and dreaded advisory lunches, though. Yet, we will remember the teachers that impacted us and worked tirelessly to teach us, and the people, friends, and classmates around us who encouraged and supported us. We will remember people like Mrs. Wenk and Mrs. Card putting together school wide pep rallies, making morning assemblies fun, and bringing spirit to this year and people like Sarah Shaff, who never fails to make people laugh even on a dreary Monday morning.

**Number Five:** “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Maya Angelou. We will probably all forget what we said during our senior speeches or did day to day in high school, but I know we will never forget the way this school and everyone in it made us feel. Whether it was Mrs. Grove’s kind smile in kindergarten or Ms. Farley’s continuous encouragement in middle school, or Mrs. Polly Jones ceaseless commitment to her students, the faculty and staff have been mentors, guiders, advisers, and friends. I will never forget the way my high school classmates made me feel. Whether it be Katie Sayers making a notecard to put on the senior lounge wall every time someone got into their dream school, or Sterling Moskal asking at morning assemblies about the victories of different sports teams, we all celebrate each other, and I will never forget that feeling.

**Number Four:** “Talent is universal. Opportunity is not.” This quote is from Rye Barcott’s book *It Happened on the Way to War*. Everyone has talent. Here we have people gifted with brilliance in academics, students who shine on the basketball court or on the baseball field. However, as citizens of the United States and students of North Cross School, we have been given a lot opportunity, opportunity that I might easily be taken for granted. We do owe gratitude to North Cross and our families, as this school has provided us with academic, athletic, and experiential opportunities we would not have had otherwise.

**Number Three:** This next quote is said by arguably one of the wisest characters in movie history. People may think I am talking about Mrs. Gump, however, this quote was said by the great Master Oogway from the movie *Kung Fu Panda*. “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it is called the present.” I think this quote really captures today. Today truly is a gift. It is a chance to celebrate. The valedictory may be given to one person, but today is for us all. It is a day to celebrate Kennedy Nwabia traveling across the globe from Nigeria, working so hard in basketball and soccer and earning a scholarship to play at the

University of Dayton next year. It is a day to celebrate Grace Chen's seamless success, including her academic achievements and her future studying engineering at Georgia Tech. It is a day to celebrate Ben Smith with his musical talents and his designation as an Echols Scholar at UVA. It is a day to celebrate Avery Sturm getting the first division one field hockey scholarship in Roanoke, and it is a day to celebrate Sage Vilgats' ability to combine her senior course work with her employment at a veterinary office. And this is just a snapshot of what this class has accomplished.

**Number Two:** "There is no joy without gratitude." Brene Brown. Today we cannot celebrate without thanking the people that have made getting here possible- our parents. The people who use to remind us to practice our multiplication tables, the people who drive hours to see us play sports, the people who have never ceased to love and guide us.

**Number One:** "Wherever you go, go with all your heart." Confucius. I truly cannot wait to see where life takes all of the amazing people behind me. I know in just a few months time, some of us will be headed to Boston or Ohio. Others are headed to South Carolina, North Carolina, and Kentucky, or Charlottesville, wahoowa! Some of us will be engineers, businessmen or women, doctors, teachers, changers, do-ers. Today really does mark a beginning. Today we are leaving and going, with a purpose, with dreams, and with hearts. With all that my class has achieved just in their high school careers, I know that still the best is yet to come.