

Student Speeches from 2018 DHS Graduation Day

Author : David Gurliacci

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Here are the full texts of the speeches given by students at Darien High School's [Class of 2018 graduation](#) on Thursday, as provided by the high school:

Welcoming Remarks

Amanda Blaze, Community Council President

Good evening and thank you all so much for coming. I would like to acknowledge and thank a few people that will be a part of the ceremony tonight and have made an invaluable impact on our school community.

Thank you to our Board of Education chair, Mrs. Ochman, and the members of the Board of Education here with us onstage. Thank you to our superintendent, Dr. Brenner.

Thank you to our amazing principal, Mrs. Dunn, whose love for each and every one of us is evident in the work that she does every day, and to our assistant principals, Dr. Greenwood, Mr. Schoenbart, and Mrs.

Dimoulas. Thank you to Mr. Ribeiro, our director of guidance.

Thank you to our extraordinary faculty, to our parents, family and friends that have supported us along the way and the ones that are here to support us tonight as we embark on a new chapter in our lives.

And last but certainly not least, the honored guests of the evening, the Class of 2018. It has been an honor to have represented this exceptional class as your Community Council president.

This class is an exemplary unit of 317 exemplary individuals. In my four years here I have witnessed unwavering commitment to supporting each and every one of the amazing things Darien High School students do.

We had an incredibly successful homecoming bonfire, even though we weren't even able to have the fire. Sports teams were greeted with booming student sections and the spring musical sold out most of their shows.

This class had such an amazing, positive attitude throughout anything that was thrown our way; this class continued to find the best in every situation to make this year the best yet.

We already know that Darien High School students exceed all expectations, but it is in our support to one another that we truly shine.

I believe I can speak for many people here to say that this is a bittersweet moment. Of course we are sad, because we have had amazing memories here, but we are also excited because we have no reason to be scared.

We have been given all the tools we need to succeed in our four years at Darien High School. Now begins our chance to use it and for that we are forever grateful. Thank you all for coming and enjoy the ceremony.

Commencement Address

Juan Perfumo

First, I would like to thank my parents for all of the sacrifices they made for me, as well as the DHS Faculty and Staff who worked with me. Also, I would like to extend my gratitude to my siblings and friends for motivating me and helping me with lots of my struggles.

I was born with only half a fully functional brain, so, due to my limitations, I was placed in special education classes.

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Despite my limitations I knew I could achieve more and I knew it would be risky and challenging. But taking the risks would not stop me, as I have always coexisted with risks.

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My family moved to United States from Argentina, so I could get a better education. Given that in Argentina there are no Special Education programs. They moved away from the family, with no jobs and no friends.

However, I witnessed that the risk they took was worth it. Because that allowed for me to undergo a complex brain surgery, receive a great education, and now even pursue a college degree.

Over the course of my career at DHS I personally took the risk of moving out of more supported classes, to more demanding classes knowing that I might not handle the challenges, and that I could fail and disappoint myself, my family, and friends.

Throughout the transition to these higher classes. I received help from the Planning and Placement Team. And my teachers encouraged me to take the risks. I entered DHS attending all Special Education and supported classes and I am now finishing my Senior year in all three rigorous classes.

Through this experience, I learned if you take calculated risks, you can get a great reward. My reward was the view others had on me had improved, as I did not let my disability define me, and even helped fuel my desire to learn more.

In order to face challenges, and take risks, Martin Luther King inspired me with his quote “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” This taught me that we should step out of our comfort zone and challenge ourselves.

Also Robert Herjavec inspired me with his quote: “The more you avoid risk the less likely it is that you’ll achieve all that is possible.”

This quote had truly spoken to me, because if I didn’t take any risk, I would be struggling to gain the confidence to pursue a college degree.

Together with my family we would pray and say *lo vamos a lograr* during truly difficult times and this means we will make it which taught me is to always have faith and never give up.

This is just the beginning of our adult lives, and we are likely to face many challenges ahead, which is why we are so lucky that DHS has given us tools to face them.

I am very grateful and forever will be to the DHS Community of students and faculty for the support along the way, and the teachings that I will carry with me to face any challenges on the road ahead.

[Editor's note: The most common translation of "*lo vamos a lograr*" [we found](#) is "*We are going to make it.*"]

Salutatory Address

Daniel Pfrommer

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Good afternoon, This speech is carefully timed and should take exactly three and a half minutes. During this time you dear parents and teachers will be sitting still on your chairs, just as the class of 2018 has done during the last four years.

In fact, we have done a lot of sitting. Combined, we have been in classrooms for a total of 150 years — 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There are at least a thousand parents and teachers here. During my three and a half minute speech you will spend a combined two and a half days listening to me talk. By the time this ceremony is over, you will have been here for a total of nine weeks.

And by the time all my minions around the country have given all their salutatorian speeches at all the high school graduations, combined you will have spent 19 centuries around-the-clock at commencement ceremonies. 19 hundred years would take us back to the peak of the Roman empire. 19 centuries is equivalent to 85 life sentences.

Should our teachers really be serving 85 life sentences?

Over four years our teachers have given each and every one of us 4,000 hours of pure knowledge. They have given up more than 1000 hours of their time to run just the extracurriculars that I participate in.

And what about our parents? They, the real MVPs, cumulatively changed 1.2 million Class-of-2018 diapers, have driven us 20 times to the moon and back, and have collectively dedicated 13,000 years to raising the class of 2018.

Parents and teachers you are awesome. And, as a special gift on behalf of the Class of 2018, I will cut my speech short by another minute and give you back some of your precious time.

Thank you, and have a great summer.

Valedictory Address

Zhihao (Alex) Wang

Good afternoon. Thank you. I was told by a friend of mine that I should start my speech with a good joke. Unfortunately, I failed to think of one, so in that spirit, I have chosen to talk about failure today.

As my math teacher liked to say whenever I was late, Alex — you made it.

Life, just like traveling from one classroom to another, is a long journey. For that reason, I chose to say that I alone did not make. Rather, we made it. We are the wave of the future.

Standing on this stage, I am humbled by all of you. You are the best and brightest, in everything from athletics to academics. However, I believe that all of us fear failing when we reach high.

I disagree with that sentiment. In my own experience, I believe that failure is the best teacher.

For a while, my home was a junior boarding school in Massachusetts. Following 9th grade, when that school ended, I thought I would continue on to a similarly-styled secondary boarding school.

It didn't happen. And I'm deeply thankful for that.

During Grade 9, I, as many members of my class, applied to a variety of private secondary schools. When the results came back, I was stunned — I failed to gain entry into any of the schools that I had applied to. I was a strong student — and yet the impossible truly happened to me.

For several months, I thought I was worthless. When people asked me where I was headed the following year, I could hardly open my mouth, because I truly did not know. I wanted to lie on a floor and never stand up again.

Fortunately, I picked myself up. I realized that it was not the failure itself, but my response to it that truly mattered.

My sophomore year, I found myself at DHS I met inspiring teachers and engaging classes. I found excitement in debate and politics through Model Congress and Model U.N. Therefore, I can say with certainty that this failure was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Unfortunately, we come from a culture that awards quick success, without valuing its required failures. Having spent three years living and learning with all of you, I know how it manifests in our daily lives.

We avoid classes that we think will challenge us for fear of what grade we will earn. We choose to do the activities that will match our strengths, rather than improve on our weaknesses.

For that reason, I chose to issue you a challenge. It is difficult. I dare you to do the things you think you absolutely cannot do. I dare you to believe that it is not just the destination that matters; it is also the journey.

Let me be clear—I am not wishing you bad luck. In all honesty, I am astounded by the success of each and every one of you, whether it is in beating New Canaan at athletics or being top students.

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However, we perceive failure as an obstacle, rather than a springboard, for future success. I disagree with that sentiment.

My wish for each of us is that we have the courage to do difficult things without fear of failure so we can arrive at our greatest accomplishments.

When you fall down, I hope you will find the power to stand again.

In the process, you will discover that you can overcome difficulties and challenges that you never thought you could overcome. You will no longer fear the strongest of winds, for you will have faced the densest of forests and the coldest of climates.

Thank you, class of 2018. Be bold. Be bold. Onwards.

Video, Showing All Speeches

You can see and hear the speeches with this DAF Media video of the entire event:

These are full texts of the speeches as prepared and may differ somewhat from the wording as spoken. Darienite does not change words (except for typographical errors), but usually makes stylistic changes in publishing full texts, as was done here. All images are from the DAF Media video of the event.