

Molly Laliberty
Salutatory Speech

Hello everyone, thank you for being here. I have to start out by saying a couple thank yous. First and most importantly, I am so thankful for my family. I honestly couldn't have accomplished even a fraction of this without my mom, my dad, my dog Howard--as he is a very important member of the family--and especially my brother Jeremy and my twin sister Emily. Jeremy will be a senior at St. John's Prep, so most people in my class do not know him, but he is one of the funniest people I know. He is kind and compassionate, and he knows how to cheer me up. Emily, you are one of my favorite people to ever grace this earth. No matter how many trivial arguments we have, I know we'll be over it within moments. You know how to make me laugh, you know exactly what I am thinking just from one look, you're my biggest supporter, and you keep me going. Words cannot describe how much I'm going to miss you a few months from now.

Additionally, to my friends who have supported me along this journey, thank you. I've met so many amazing people at NHS, and I feel truly lucky because of that. One of my closest friends, Margaret Cote, is graduating first in our class. I've had the pleasure of knowing Margaret for over a decade, and she is the most hardworking person I know, and deserves all the wonderful things that have come her way because of it.

Congratulations, Margaret. The majority of this class has known each other since kindergarten, but also, we have grown close with people we might never have imagined would become our friends. Yet, many of us find no closer friendships than the ones we have developed from sports teams or theatre or band or clubs. We spend almost every day together, and although sometimes we all get on each others' nerves, we have all been lucky enough to find family within our classmates. Personally, I would not be who I am today without the girls I have shared the lacrosse field or cross country course with, under the guidance of coaches who have shaped me not just into an athlete, but into a person.

I would also like to thank my teachers. At NHS, we've all been very lucky to have been afforded such an amazing education, and the teachers who come into this school everyday have been integral in getting us all here today. But the education we have received has been more than just what lies within the common core curriculum. For example, in our history textbooks, there is only one paragraph about the fight for Women's Suffrage. But Mrs. Osgood went further than that, teaching about the women who sacrificed everything for a vote. Or in Calculus, where we learned more about derivatives than we probably ever wanted to know, but where we also learned that math could actually be fun; I don't think I would've ever said that without Mr. Littlefield. And in Government and Politics we didn't just learn about the amendments or the founding fathers; Mr. LaChapelle brought a passion into the classroom that inspired all of us and helped us realize the roles we could all play in shaping the country.

My point is, education is much more than what we are tested on at the end of the year. As W.E.B. DuBois said, "the object of all true education is not to make men carpenters, it is to make carpenters men". Education is about learning how to take this one life, and make it into something.

We are so lucky to live in a time where information is at our fingertips. When we all part ways and leave Newburyport, there may not be a Mrs. Osgood or Mr. Littlefield or Mr. LaChapelle around. It is essential that we do not let that stop us.. There may be a time in each of our lives where the information we are given is not sufficient—we cannot let that be a reason to stop learning. If we are to right the wrongs we see around us, we need to educate ourselves, and that will not happen passively. So ask questions. And when those questions are answered, examine the answer. One of my favorite poets, Harlym125, said that the most dangerous sound in this world is "shhh". Do not let people "shh" you. Do not be silenced. Speak your voice, and speak it loud. By nature, humans are insatiable. If we continue to be curious, if we continue to ask questions, I don't think there's anything that can stop us from achieving what we want.

When I think about Newburyport, there is so much to take pride in, be it academics, athletics, or arts. But the world is so much bigger than this

beautiful city. The world is filled with different people and languages and cultures. To embrace that is to allow ourselves to learn.

We have learned so much about the world throughout our years at Newburyport, unfortunately though, not everything in this world is good. I feel it is important to take a moment remember that, although for us, today, graduating high school is an amazing day, filled with memories and excitement and achievement, for others, today is a very different day. There are too many kids in this country who will never see their graduation because they were killed in art class. Kids who were in school, like we were, who never came home. I don't have all the answers, but I do know that something has to change. We have to make a change. We have to be loud, we have to vote, and we have to fix this. We will be the generation that ensures there is never another school shooting, and we will do that not just by remembering those who lost their lives, but by working together to make sure that they are the last ones.

Every student sitting behind me is so deserving of wearing this cap and gown. We have all worked so hard to get here. Thank your families, thank your friends, thank your teachers, but most of all, thank yourselves. Nobody can get here alone, but at the end of the day, we did it. From freshman year to now, we have put in countless hours of work to get here, and that is something to be very proud of. It is strange to think this is the last time we will all be together, and I'm not quite sure how to address that. So, I will leave you all with this:
Make good friends. Eat good food. Read good books. Listen to good music. Ask good questions. But most of all, be good people. Congratulations Class of 2018!