

Nick Fournier

### Honor Assembly Speech

Good morning everyone-- I would like to open by taking the chance to thank Dr. Graham and the rest of the upper school faculty for kindly gifting me the privilege to be able to speak to you all today-- I truly feel honored to have been chosen for this opportunity. And now that the formalities have been taken care of, to the students-- I will do my best to not take that long up here as I realize that probably a good 90 percent of you want to get out of here as soon as possible and the other 10 percent probably aren't listening. And as you can probably already tell, or will find out soon, public speaking isn't exactly my greatest strength so I'm somewhat wishing that I had paid better attention to former speakers at honor assemblies in the past, and not been in that 10 percent, so I would have been able to more easily formulate a coherent speech. Before choosing what I would discuss today, I figured it wouldn't be best to talk about myself the whole time as I'm sure no one is that curious about my Netflix addiction and tendency to procrastinate, although I justify such actions with the idea that, well, diamonds are formed under pressure, baby. Also, a certain suggestion that I should attempt to expose the school's darkest secrets and lies sort of fell apart, because I realized that if I tried to inform everyone that English teachers aren't fully telling the truth when they say that "it is imperative you start your summer reading and journals weeks before the deadline," and that "you will be unable to complete such assignments the night before" would simply result in me telling you information you already know, we've all been there and done that. Really, such false claims only fall second to the world's governments attempting to convince the general population that

the earth is round, but we all know its flat and anyone who would believe otherwise is a complete and utter fool... sorry I should stop ranting and get back to the topic, academic excellence. And more specifically, the importance of striving for academic excellence instead of striving for seemingly effortless perfection. When thinking in depth about this topic, I have realized that I myself have experienced quite a rollercoaster of a journey in my academic endeavors and there is nowhere better to start --well than the start-- so-- let's rewind to 7th grade. I had just transferred to St. Margaret's and through the process of adapting to the school had figured out that the best way to satisfy my parents' wants , my personal needs, and the SMES tuition, was to not focus on my academic responsibilities yet instead, get really good at video games on the iPad. Although for the life of me, I didn't understand what the heck  $y=mx+b$  meant, I had a 98 overall Madden Mobile Team, had just reached Crystal Three in Clash of Clans and could consistently get to a score of about 15 on flappy bird. Needless to say, the days when my report cards came back were not the best and then the proceeding week without the iPad as a punishment was even worse. As a seventh grader, I didn't fully realize the severity of not doing assigned work and learning the basic material for what lied down the road in high school, yet somehow after overcoming a very tumultuous year, decided that in 8<sup>th</sup> grade I would start trying. I eventually gave in to all of my teacher's suggestions that high school would be significantly harder than middle school and would probably want to start applying myself in the classroom. My desire to strive for success was also likely assisted by the numerous awkward situations that arose due to my gaps of knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, consistently getting tests back and having the teacher hand it back basically folded so no one else could see my score was always rough and the proceeding plethora of red ink

marks that tattooed my pages were nothing short of discouraging. However, through hard work and having a growth mindset, I was able to go through my eight grade and freshman years with only relatively minor hiccups and had developed a passion for learning. Simply getting work done was an accomplishment for myself, and once I realized I had the potential to succeed in the classroom, I believed in myself and attempted to be the best scholar that I could. My bar was, in all reality, set pretty low, but once I was able to surpass each hurdle that I presented myself with, I wanted to further challenge myself to do better. But, as a lot of us know, when life seems to be just going as swimmingly as possible, issues arise. In my sophomore year I missed about 3 weeks of school with a sports injury and the resulting make up work was about as painful as the injury itself. Before I had returned to school, I had accepted that I likely would be unable to recuperate fully in the classroom and that my grades would likely decline quite a bit, and this dissociation from a desire to be perfect ultimately helped me overcome the challenge that I faced. In most of my classes, I generally did well and maintained a decent report card, nothing to write home about, but nothing to lose an iPad over either. However, when my mountain of make-up work seemed to be disappearing, my lack of effort in middle school finally caught up to me. Devoid of basic algebra skills, Algebra 2 Honors presented itself to be quite the feat alone, but with 2 units to make up, it seemed like an insurmountable task. But, regardless of what lied ahead, I toughed through it and did my best to learn the necessary information. I studied hard for multiple tests and quizzes and prepared myself for success to the best of my abilities. Unwilling to give up, I made it to the day of the last test and was well--- not necessarily excited to take a test cause that just makes me sound insane, but was curious to see how my efforts would eventually pay off. During the test, I can't say I felt the most

confident but once finishing, my hard work and dedication were satisfied with me getting the test back and getting a 100% on it, I was simply overjoyed. I'm totally kidding---that all would've been really cool, but, in reality, my grade on the assignment hovered somewhere around a 30%. But I was still quite proud of myself. I was proud of what I had accomplished in my circumstances. I was proud of not giving up. I was proud on becoming the student I was once the opposite of. I had done the best that I could do and worked hard to achieve my personal goals, and it taught me that success doesn't always equate to a grade or a result that would be considered good, let alone excellent. Through failure, I understood that imperfection is perfectly acceptable so long as you learn from it, and use your shortcomings and mishaps to better yourself for the future. In a time in which societal pressures to excel and outshine are outstandingly high, people can let themselves be defined and labeled by the grades they receive, and forget about the unique person that earned them. So---to conclude--- I urge that you learn from your mistakes, openly accept failure, and lastly, strive to be your best self, not who others want you to be. Thank you for your time.