



Words to Live By: Graduation Wisdom from 2025



Heather Lageman for xSEleratED

🎓 *Every spring, the field of education celebrates as a new generation of graduates steps into the world with knowledge, dreams, and – perhaps most importantly – inspiration. The graduation ceremonies of 2025 were no exception. Whether you’re a new graduate, a proud parent, or just someone looking for a spark of inspiration, the 2025 commencement season delivered powerful messages worth remembering. We’ve curated some of the best advice and most moving quotes from this year’s speakers; each one a reminder of the power of growth, courage, and purpose.*

🌟 Steven Levy

Temple University College of Liberal Arts



"Everything you have learned in the liberal arts - the humanities - depends on that connection. You bring your superpower to it."

Wired tech journalist Steven Levy reassured graduates that despite the rise of AI, it cannot replicate uniquely human connections, empathy, or consciousness."

🎓 Advice → Go out and seize the world. It is still yours to conquer.

😊 Elizabeth Banks

The University of Pennsylvania

"You're really only ever competing with yourself, with the limitations you're willing to accept, with the smallness of someone else's idea of what you're capable of."

The actress talked about how the problems of this world will take all of us to solve them, so we need to spread the wealth. We need to invite more people to the solutions party, not less.



🎓 Advice → When I didn't get my slices of pie, I baked my own.



Derek Jeter

University of Michigan



“How you approached today, and every day, is a choice - your choice. Your life will ultimately be framed by the choices you make.”

The Hall of Fame Major League Baseball player, entrepreneur and philanthropist spoke about commitment and purpose. He suggests seeing disappointment as an opportunity to learn, not as a reason to quit. Surround yourself with the right people to help buoy you after a failure – and make your chance of success greater.

🎓 Advice → Embrace change, focus on goals and learn from others.



Simone Biles

Washington University in St. Louis

“The world doesn’t need you to be perfect. It needs you to be bold.”

The Olympic champion encouraged graduates to embrace boldness, show up for yourself consistently, be the greatest you, stay creative, be a leader, and never give up.



🎓 Advice → The world needs courageous, persistent individuals.



Ajay Banga

Georgetown University



“Strict adherence to a meticulous plan deprives your career – and your life – of the opportunity to seize and pursue luck. Don’t spend your time plotting your career as a series of steps on a ladder. Take the plunge.”

The President of the World Bank Group shared his secrets for a successful career. He explained that success is not a straight path paved by hard work alone; it’s shaped by the unexpected, driven by purpose, and sustained by character.

🎓 Advice → Seize luck, chase curiosity and lead with decency.



Dr. Huda Zoghbi

Rice University

“Ultimately, success is a team sport. We are all part of a great chain of learners...choose friends and loved ones who will help you become stronger in character, gentler in spirit & truer to your best self.”

The prize-winning world famous neurogeneticist discussed how she sees the beauty of academia is that it is a gift economy, not a market economy. By being generous in turn, she has kept her mentors’ original gifts to her circulating in the lives of her students and colleagues.



🎓 Advice → Live generously.



Martina Cheung

George Mason University



“Don’t collect promotions, collect experiences,” she said. Those often come in lateral moves, changing industries or organizations or even taking-on extra work. The pay bump may not be immediate, but different roles are what can make you a better leader.”

The President and CEO of S&P Global encouraged that if something is interesting, grads should go for it, playing the long game. Rather than worry about the prestige. If you are passionate about it, it’s going to help you achieve your goals.

🎓 Advice → Live authentically.



A.J. Brown

University of Mississippi

“Success isn’t owned, it’s rented,” he told the class of 2025. It needs to be consistently worked for by “watching your own film” and learning from your mistakes. “That self-awareness is a leadership skill.”

The Eagles wide receiver concluded encouraging all graduates to think of themselves as their own operations. “Your discipline is your product, your name is your brand, your habits are your investments.”



🎓 Advice → Make discipline your habit.



Kermit the Frog

University of Maryland



His “Kermencement” speech encouraged graduates to “leap together instead of leaping over someone else.”

The world’s most famous frog, wearing a Muppet-size cap and gown, thrilled the crowd at the commencement ceremony with his humor. His speech included three things close to his heart: finding your people, taking the leap and making connections. He also paid tribute to Henson whom he said “in the early days, had a hand in literally everything I did.”

He also mentioned Henson’s wife Jane, who also attended University of Maryland and died in 2013 at the age of 79 after a long battle with cancer.

🎓 Advice → Leave the world better than you found it.





From the Worthy Educator to You

Which quote speaks to you the most? Let the words from these speeches - the sage advice, innovative strategies and hope-filling mantras that we want to etch in our minds - be the North Star you carry into the next chapter of life, no matter where you are on your journey.



Our June Bonus Resource!



Year-End Superlatives Template & Guide for Educators 🎉

Celebrate your colleagues with intention, humor, and heart.

End-of-year staff superlatives are a fun, affirming way to recognize the dedication, personality, and unique magic each educator brings to the school community. When crafted thoughtfully, they can deepen team bonds and uplift spirits.

Step 1: Choose a Tone 🗣️

Decide on the tone you want for the superlatives. Mixing styles is great - just make sure each one is respectful and celebratory.

Tone	Examples
Warm & Heartfelt	"Biggest Heart in the Building"
Playful & Light	"Most Likely to Have 17 Tabs Open (and Know What They All Are)"
Inspirational	"Most Likely to Change the World One Student at a Time"
Behind-the-Scenes Hero	"The Glue That Holds It All Together"

Step 2: Reflect on Colleagues 🗣️

Use these prompts to brainstorm:

- What makes this colleague special on your team?
- What do they bring to the culture, community, or students?
- What's their "superpower" as an educator?
- How do they lift up others?
- What will you miss or remember most about them this year?