

Forældretale ved Dimissionen på Herlufsholm Skole 25. juni 2026

Few details of this speech have been edited out

It is really a pleasure to give this speech today on behalf of the parents. And it is impossible to capture all the feelings of a day like today. We are proud and happy as parents, and some of us are wondering where on earth the time went.

I want to start with Herlufsholm as a school and institution.

Dear Chairman, Heis, Teachers, dorm teachers and all other staff

What Martin and I have observed here is a community of dedicated people — the teachers who both teach, support and challenge our children, the kitchen and service staff, and the dorm teachers that take care of the students every day, arrange activities and are proud of the traditions at their dorms. I have seen them stand by the football field, cheering from the top of their lungs for their team.

So thank you for educating them these last 3 years, feeding them, and helping them keep their rooms (and this school) spotless. Thank you for travelling with them to places like Colombia, Oman, Dubai, the UK and the USA, and for taking them to the theatre, for teaching them to fence, to do yoga, to plant trees and care about the environment, and to look for opportunities beyond these walls. We have also seen how exchange students are hosted here and how the school hosts sports tournaments and wins them, and parties where we, as parents, once a year get a sip from the fountain of youth.

I would also like to acknowledge the administration, for the battles you fight on the school's behalf when the school is challenged.

As one parent to another, I would also like to thank the parent representatives who have given so much of their time.

Kære Studenter - Dear Graduates

Every time we come here, Martin and I talk about that it is livsbekræftende, life-affirming in English, to be here.

I see your generation of bright, beautiful young adults standing in front of us - with good manners, and impressive dancing skills. Do you remember the first day you came to this school and how it felt....and now you are graduating with so many memories and friendships. It is also worth acknowledging for those of you who have lived here, that it is difficult to be away from your families, and for your families to miss you while you are here. But we, as parents, are immensely proud of your achievements.

As you graduate today, you will make more and more of your own choices – like what colour should I wear today (unless you keep wearing the uniform). Others are deciding what your values are. You already know the values of your families, and you know the values this institution was built on. But deliberately choosing your own values is a process.

Let me share how that went for me. You are welcome to see whether it resonates with you — and just as welcome to decide it doesn't, because you will go on shaping your own.

/.../

I took his advice about **partying** and practised and became good at it.

The **ambitious** part felt straightforward. I did my best. I hit a few walls and failed a few exams along the way, but I always did my best.

The **kindness** he meant was not simply the absence of unkindness. Let me explain. Imagine you are with two friends, and one says something mean to the other. If you stay silent, you have not been unkind yourself — but true kindness would be to speak up, to say that you don't agree and that the comment was uncalled for. You can travel a very long way in life through kindness.

The **tolerance** part is a bit more tricky, and it took me some years to understand. It means to look beyond what is right in front of you.

Try to find the reasons behind people's actions and reactions. In the example with the two friends, it changes everything if the one who made the remark was new to the school and trying to fit in. Or imagine you see someone your own age swaying uncertainly at the train station on a Friday night — it matters enormously whether they have simply had a few drinks, or whether they have diabetes and a dangerously low blood sugar.

/.../We should try to make good choices, not that we shouldn't fail. And as a physician and scientist, I fail all the time. I know that nine out of ten experiments fail — but it is the tenth that might move science forward. I know that more than nine out of ten grant applications are rejected with a single stroke of a pen — but the tenth funds our research. In the same way, nine out of ten new companies fail — yet all ten contribute something to our society in the process.

My point is simple: mistakes and failures are not the opposite of success. They are part of it. And often it's not enough to try just once.

And so, with these words, and the encouragement to party, be ambitious, kind, inclusive, tolerant and learn from your mistakes, we congratulate you, for your hard work, the friendships you have built, and everything you get to carry with you from this place to your next steps in life — wherever they may lead.

Please raise your glasses with me for Herlufsholm and the cohort of 2026!