

Speech by Reef N – 2026 Scholarship Winner

Good morning, parents, teachers, and students. My name is Reef, and it's an honour to stand here today and reflect on my academic journey with all of you. When I first enrolled at North Shore at the start of Year 6, I had no idea how much I would grow—not just in my schoolwork, but in the way I think, work, and approach challenges. Looking back now, I can see how every lesson, every piece of feedback, and every expectation helped shape the achievements I'm proud to share today.

I'll be honest: at first, I wasn't convinced this place would make much of a difference. I even thought it might end up being a bit of a waste of time. I imagined it would just be extra homework stacked on top of school, and I wasn't sure I was ready for that. But it didn't take long for me to realise how wrong I was. Very quickly, I began to see that North Shore wasn't just about doing more work—it was about doing better work. It was about pushing myself in ways I hadn't before.

With the help of North Shore, I was able to achieve more than I ever expected. I won a scholarship and received the Academic Excellence Award at my school, which was a huge milestone for me. I was also accepted into the Aranmore AEP class for academic extension. On top of that, I earned the Maths Award of Excellence—something I'm especially proud of because it showed me how far my confidence and skills had grown.

When I first started, I didn't expect anything to change. I thought I'd go through the motions, complete the tasks, and that would be it. But the lessons here challenged me in a way I hadn't experienced. They pushed me to think harder, to question more deeply, and to aim higher than I thought I could. Suddenly, it didn't feel like "extra work" anymore; it felt like the beginning of real improvement, the kind that builds slowly but stays with you.

As I continued through my time at North Shore, I noticed gradual but meaningful changes in how I approached my studies. I found myself becoming more disciplined, more organised, and more willing to take on challenges rather than avoid them. The teachers didn't just teach content—they taught me how to think, how to problem-solve, and how to believe in the value of consistent effort. These small shifts added up, and over time, they made a huge difference in both my confidence and my academic performance.

Now, standing here and reflecting on this journey, I'm genuinely grateful for the environment North Shore created. The support from the teachers, the structured learning, and the high expectations all played a part in helping me grow in ways I never anticipated when I first walked through those doors. I've learned that progress doesn't come from shortcuts; it comes from steady effort, from being challenged, and from having people around you who believe in your potential.

I'm thankful to have experienced that here, and I know the lessons I've learned will stay with me long after today. Thank you for listening.