

Change, Choices, and Hard Work

Good evening everyone. We gather here tonight to celebrate and validate the graduation of the Pahrump Valley High School Class of 2017.

On behalf of the entire Class of 2017, I would like to welcome you to tonight's graduation ceremony here at Pahrump Valley High School.

Welcome district administration and members of the NCSD Board of Trustees.

I want to thank Mr Brockman, Mr Odegard, and Mrs Miller and give a special thanks to Mrs Shockley for working so hard to make this evening a success.

But most of all, I want to thank all parents, family and friends for coming to honor the Class of 2017. Without you, these graduates would not be sitting here tonight awaiting the life changes that are about to occur.

Graduates, I had many of you in class, some of you just once, but many I got to see over a period of several years. It was a pleasure watching you "grow up" as you moved through high school. Tonight is my last time to address you as a group and I'd like to leave you with three last pieces of advice.

Change ... (noun) the act or instance of making or becoming different. Change ... something that starts for each and every one of you tonight. Change will be a constant in your lives. You can not keep things the same. Your high school friends, the school routine, the favorite hang out place, and the way of life you have now will be the first things to change. Some of you will start a job, some will move away to college, some will start serving in the military, some of you will get a place of your own ... Things in your life will be different now. You will start adulting.

These changes can be exciting but also very intimidating and very scary. Questions that you will be wondering about ... What will my life be like now that high school is over? Where will I end up living? What kind of a job will I have? How will I provide for myself? Will I have a family of my own? Thinking about all of this might make you want to gaze into a Crystal Ball to get peek at what that adulting world will look like for you. (Special thanks to Makayla and Amanda for creating a Crystal Ball for me) Although nothing but a thought prop, we often referred to a Crystal Ball in class. The Crystal Ball is useful in getting students thinking about what is going to happen to them down the road of life.

However, I don't need a Crystal Ball to assure you of one thing. Living life will cause you to have to deal with many changes. You may change college majors. You may change jobs many times. You may move to many places. You have no idea what the future holds for you. When I headed across the stage at my high school graduation, I never would have dreamed that I would be teaching Chemistry and Physics for 33 years. Speaking at a graduation ceremony at Pahrump Valley High School in Nevada would have been a purely fictional idea. But here I am. My life sure didn't turn out like I was expecting it would when I was sitting at my high school graduation. My life has taken many twists and turns. Some good and some bad. And so will yours.

What will your life look like in 5 years? In 10 years? In 30 years? No one knows. It's your story that is yet to be written.

Choice ... (noun) an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities.

Choices. What your life looks like in the future will be greatly influenced by choices that you make. I encourage my students to make choices that will build their resumes while in high school. I ask them to consider ... What will make them acceptable to a college? What will a future employer see in their resume that would entice them to hire them instead of someone else? What will you do that will enable you to compete with a high school graduate from some other part of the country? ... How can I stand out in a crowd?

The choices that you have made in high school will open and close doors for you in the near future. Five or ten years from now, not so much. As you leave this field you will begin writing a new resume. This one will be called adulthood. What choices will you make in building this new resume? I ask you to consider the choices that you make very carefully.

Mike DeWine once said, “One of the most important things that I have learned ... is that life is all about choices. On every journey you take, you face choices. At every fork in the road, you make choices. And it is those decisions that shape our lives.”

Yes, the choices that each and every one of you make will shape your lives. You will make good choices, you will make bad choices; that, I can assure you. However, as one of my favorite Star Trek characters Jean-Luc Picard said, “There are many parts of my youth that I’m not proud of. There were many loose threads, untidy parts of me that I would like to remove. But when I pulled on one of those threads – it unraveled the tapestry of my life.”

You will become a manifestation of your choices. How will your choices shape your future? How will those choices decorate the tapestry of your life? What will your adulting resume look like in 5 years? 10 years? 30 years? No one knows. It’s your story that is yet to be written.

Work ... (verb) be engaged in physical or mental activity in order to achieve a purpose or result, especially in one's job; do work. Work. Hard work. An **I Will** attitude, dedication, and a commitment to doing the job to the best of your ability can drive success and move you forward no matter what obstacles you may encounter.

Neil Degrasse Tyson once commented to a group of college students.

Whatever your GPA is will rapidly become irrelevant in your life. I can not impress upon you how irrelevant it becomes. Ask anybody just a few years older than you “When was the last time someone asked you about your GPA? And they will have long since forgotten, because in life, they’re not gonna ask you for your GPA. They will ask you “are you a hard worker?” “Are you a problem solver?” ”Are you committed?” “Are you a leader?” All of these other questions matter the rest of your life.

Class of 2017, I can assure you that you are more than your GPA; you are more than a test score.

I use a quote from time to time with students. It states that “Your **I will** is more important than your IQ.” “Your **I will** is more important than your IQ.”

The **I will**.

Whether the job requires a college degree or you're making a pizza at a fast food joint:

I will demonstrate a willingness to work hard.

I will ask for clarification if a job expectation is unclear.

I will show up on time.

I will take the initiative and go beyond the basic expectations.

I will work just as hard under direct supervision or alone.

I will work well with others.

I will respect those around me at all times.

I can assure you that a good **I will** will get you noticed very quickly and it will get you far in life.

Where will your hard work and **I Will** get you in 5 years? 10 years? 30 years? No one knows. We don't have a Crystal Ball. But tonight it begins. It's time to Plug and Chug. It's time to begin adulting. It's time to begin writing your story.

Garry Mason

Pahrump Valley High School 2017 Graduation Address