

Good Afternoon. My name is Terry Hernandez, principal of Chester Jr/Sr High School. I started teaching and coaching here in 1995 and I have seen a lot of changes, none bigger than what we are currently facing. But that doesn't mean we can't come out better as students and people on the other end. I offer these words of encouragement moving forward.

We're making the decision to remain closed until May 1st. Many of you may have seen the [governor's statement] that public schools may -- or will -- not return this year. It's possible we'll be in the same position. We're mindful that we can not fully predict what will come to pass over the weeks ahead. We will not reopen school until it is safe to do so. We, like you, are anxiously awaiting the return of our students' laughter and joy to our halls. We hope that we are able to reach that point in the near future, and we are committed to keeping you informed along the way. To that end I would like to share a few important thoughts.

One thing I always hear from students and parents is "great school or good school or bad school." Everyone always has an opinion on whether their school is good or bad without considering their role in that equation. In my opinion, school is what you make of it.

Think about the great teachers you have or have had in the past. Yes, they were good instructors, but what they were really good at was **inspiring** you to learn. Now that inspiration needs to come from within. Students more than ever hold their own future in their hands, and you have to **seize the moment**. You have a great opportunity in front of you. I guarantee colleges and future employers are watching closely to see who has the work ethic and leadership skills they are looking for. Some very positive results can come out of this for students. On the flip side, those who choose to complain, blame, and finger point will be left behind.

This situation we find ourselves in will reveal your true CHARACTER. For those of us who have been in the coaching world for a long time, we have always defined character to our players as "It's what you are when nobody's looking." Right now, that definition couldn't ring more true.

Understand that we are not on vacation; there is important work to be done. Starting April 27th assignments will be counted for grades. It is important that you are fully engaged with this new learning experience now! Obviously, once grading starts you will not want to be working out technology issues or other problems which will slow your progress once the ball is rolling. So if you're not attending zoom meetings now I would strongly suggest you do so.

I see your parents' roles as staying positive and checking your laptop or other device to make sure you have been attending classes and meetings. They must know that we understand that these are tough times, and we know they can't sit there with you all day. There needs to be trust more than ever between you and your parents, but they also must hold you accountable because we can't do that for them right now.

Our school motto at Chester Jr/Sr High School is **Dare to be Great**. I encourage and challenge all of us, regardless of which school you attend, to live by these four words and we will get through this better and stronger than ever.