
SUMUS LEONES

December 2020

Is Social Distancing Too Relaxed?

By Micaiah Jegede, eighth grade

Nine months of social distancing has people itching to get out of the house and back to their normal lives. As of November 18, COVID-19 cases have hit a toll of 172,391 according to the New York Times. Being trapped inside has been very hard for kids and adults who can't see their friends and family.

Since more people are getting tested, people are becoming more aware of whether or not they have COVID-19. But testing is not the only reason that COVID-19 cases are going up, according to the COVID-19 tracking project, as testing has only gone up 11%.

Dr. Jonathan Reiner, a professor at George Washington University School of Medicine was quoted in a CNN article saying, "On average, two to three weeks ago, we were seeing 70,000 to 80,000 (new) cases per day. Yesterday, there were about 155,000 (new) cases. So if you're alarmed at the 1,700 deaths today, two to three weeks from now, we're going to see 3,000 deaths a day."

Health officials are urging people to stay home for the upcoming holidays to prevent a rise in cases

Many students have said that they have seen people socially distant at the start of the pandemic and they are seeing fewer people now.

"But more and more people are going to public events, gathering close together, and having 'socially distanced' playdates, or birthday parties," said Sadie Greenhalgh, a sixth grader. "More people are quarantining together."

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“Mostly, I see people doing what they are supposed to be doing,” said college counselor Mr. O’Brien. He did concede that, “maybe people don't always give the same space as they did in the beginning when passing by, or go the wrong way down the aisle in the supermarket,”

“I feel like people are doing a lot better getting used to wearing masks and I know people are starting to use their social media platforms to endorse wearing masks and following social distance precautions,” said eighth grader Capri Romney.



Several members of Washington Latin’s faculty gathered to celebrate Dr. Smith’s retirement, wearing masks and maintaining safe distance apart

Does Bias Have a Place in the Classroom?

By Lydia Park and Sophia Smith, eighth grade

Latin students and staff always wondered how to include their own opinions into the learning experience. Controversial topics like religion and politics can be difficult to talk about with an open mind. Can these conversations have a place in the classroom?

Students shared how they feel about biased lessons and what they think is acceptable.

“There is no topic that I feel should completely stay out of classrooms,” explained Gavin Neubauer, a tenth grader. “The best conversations are often found on difficult topics. If a teacher can approach these conversations with maturity and open-mindedness, then the conversation can work.”

On the other hand, some middle schoolers weighed in, claiming teachers should not share political opinions during class.

Sixth grader Giselle Norquist mentioned that “Many students have different opinions and I think that when a teacher talks negatively or ignores one side of an argument, students might think they are forced to agree with their teacher even if they think they have different opinions or beliefs.”

Seventh grader J.D. Miller agreed, commenting on what he thinks is too far for teachers to go, “As long as it does not include putting someone's religion over another or influencing a candidate or a decision you made personally. Like waffles over pancakes is fine but Christianity over Judaism crosses the line.”

For teachers, this creates the challenge of how to share their ideas respectfully, without swaying students.

“I would try to do it in a way that was respectful and informative, not punitive, and not to ridicule or embarrass people,” explained Ms. Haywood, an eighth grade English teacher.

Some teachers noted that they try to reserve their opinion so that students could judge and evaluate their own ideas.

“I personally feel that the most valuable learning experience is when students can decide for themselves what's right,” announced Mr. Staten, the sixth grade civics teacher.

Others think self expression doesn't have to be at the cost of students' individuality.

Eighth grade history teacher Mr. Byrd argued, "At the end of the day (a teacher) has to be true to what their beliefs are. Because that's what we want to teach our students too. You know, we want our students to be true to who they are. We want our students to have high morals, and high standards, and high character. And I don't think it's wrong for a teacher to want to voice their opinion. I think you should always give students the room to have their own opinion, but a teacher has to be true to themselves," Mr. Byrd added, "It's not only my job to teach history, it's also my job to teach character."

Some teachers try to keep their bias out of the classroom because they do not want students to feel pressured to side with them.

"One of the most important areas for unbiased teaching would be in the area of race and gender. How do we, as teachers, prevent our personal biases from influencing our teaching?" Mr. Wills, the seventh-grade history teacher answered that with, "One thing that I often do to intentionally control myself from biased teaching is to offer two or more perspectives on a particular topic. These perspectives are almost always polar opposites."

For both students and teachers, many of them feel that teaching touchy subjects like race and gender in the classroom are acceptable if they are able to provide multiple perspectives and teach it with respect. Luckily at Washington Latin, the teachers do a great job of doing just that.



Washington Latin students as a Model UN conference. Model UN forces students to see different sides of complex international issues, representing the point of view of countries- unbiased by their own opinions.

Turkey from a Distance

By Zoe Wood, sixth grade, with Nile Thaxton, senior, contributing

With the risk of COVID-19 central in people's minds, and the number of cases in Washington, D.C. creeping up since October, many Washington Latin teachers and faculty members were unsure what to do about Thanksgiving. Visiting relatives would be complicated, and inviting people into their home had certain risks.

Mr. Hotchkiss, upper school English teacher, didn't travel to New York this year as usual, but he does plan to go home for Christmas.

Prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, he said, "Instead, my chosen "family" here and I will get together for a Friendsgiving. We'll bundle up and eat outside. Having a backyard and a fire pit helps for this. We'll have 10 people. Throughout the day, I plan on doing Zoom calls to watch football with my brother, and make some phone calls to my parents who are Luddites."

He wasn't alone in changing family plans. Some people said they would still see relatives, but limit the number to just a few people.

Fifth and sixth grade theater teacher Mr. Baldwin said, "We cannot see everyone in the family this year." He decided to make changes to keep his family safe.

Sixth grade English teacher Ms. Reed said, "I won't be able to do my usual traveling and my friendsgiving is cancelled."

Others, like Rina Saxon in the 6th grade, were able to have a few relatives over. Ahead of Thanksgiving, she mentioned, "I will have my cousins over but no elderly people will be there."



Rina Saxon's Thanksgiving table



Scenes from Mr. Baldwin's Thanksgiving celebration



Hopes for Joe

By Nick Kempf and Lydia Park, eighth grade

A new year, a new president. With Joe Biden winning the 2020 presidential election, lots of policies are expected to change. Joe Biden will be officially President on Inauguration day, January 20, 2021. He will be entering the Presidency with Kamala Harris, the first female, minority vice president. What does the Washington Latin community hope and expect from the next four years?

Students and teachers alike expressed concern regarding policies, COVID, etc.

Mr. Torrence, Physics and AP Environmental Science teacher shared what he hopes will happen in the upcoming years, “I hope that people take a genuine interest in continuing to recognize the disparity that exists in the treatment of minority groups. Specifically Black people with law enforcement, women’s pay in sports and in the workplace, and with the LGBTQ community in all things. It begins with having safe spaces to RECOGNIZE, discuss, and unpack hundreds of years of oppression.”

“I think Americans can start living the American dream,” Mr. Byrd, eighth grade American History teacher commented. He also added, “[Americans can] become united rather than fighting against each other.”

Teachers also voiced what they think will be remembered about Biden’s term.

Mr. Hotchkiss, upper school english teacher, shared, “I think folks will have a close eye on two big things: (1) How he is able to restore our relationships with other countries and, maybe, maintain our status as the premier international leader and (2) if he is able to convince Congress to work collaboratively, bipartisanly.”

Eleventh grader Nia Matthews-Cox, commented on what she wants to be changed in terms of the language used in the government with Joe Biden. “I want the rhetoric and general language of the government to change. I want hypocrisy, lies, and ignorance to be condemned by this nation again.” Nia also added that she has worries about Biden’s upcoming term. “I worry he’ll be too moderate. He’ll falter in fear of angering conservatives and former Trump supporters and won’t push through the legislation and major policy changes that everyone will benefit from.”

On the contrary Ehren Pyburn, eighth grade, commented that he has no worries and he hopes Joe Biden will, “Address things about COVID and the stimulus...gun laws and more funding for other places.”

Senior LiQian explained her hopes and thoughts about Joe Biden and what he has done in the past, “I will say that the general feeling was that I believe Biden is better than Trump, but he is not good in my mind. He has done many many immoral things (such as the Anita hill trial, voting against integration, drafting the crime bill that caused EXTREME mass incarceration) so I hope that he takes accountability for things he has done & tries to do something to right some of his wrongs by making a change in the criminal justice system. I also hope he does more than that like accepting the green new deal.”

Students hope that Biden’s plan for unity will help break the tension between political differences and ideas.

Max Aaron, an eighth grader, thinks that people will be brought closer together with less divisive language from leadership. “I think people won't get as angry and divided with a somewhat neutral president like Joe Biden, as we did with a very extreme president like Trump.”

Rina Saxon, a sixth grader, talked about how she hopes immigration policies will change with Biden. “I hope that Biden stops children from being separated from their parents.”

Oscar Murray, an eighth grader, shared that he is excited about Biden’s upcoming term. “I am looking forward to a COVID-19-free America, where all people, no matter [of] class, race, etc. can be free of stress and uncertainty, I am looking forward to an America without fear.” He also mentioned, “Trump has led by creating barriers of hate and fear and as an American citizen I want those brought down.”



Sixth graders Rina Saxon and Hannah Park with a Joe Biden sign

The Electoral College: Trash or Treasure?

By Ella Hankins, freshman, with Sadie Greenhalgh, sixth grade, contributing

Every four years, the United States elects a president through the Electoral College.

This process has each state and Washington D.C. vote for a group of electors who then will vote for the presidential candidates on their behalf. Each state gets a certain number of electors based on representation in Congress. For example, California has 55 electors, each with one vote, because it has 53 members in the House of Representatives and, like all states, and has two senators. Virginia has thirteen Electoral College votes, with eleven House members and two senators. California has more House members, and therefore more Electoral College members, than Virginia because the number of House of Representatives members is based on population and California has a much larger population than Virginia. The Constitution states that D.C. gets 3 electoral votes even though we are not a state. U.S. citizens do not directly vote for the president, meaning the candidate that wins the popular vote is not necessarily the president.

Mr. Staten, the 6th grade Civics teacher, explained the Electoral College was created out of two fears of Founding Fathers that certain states might grow too powerful.

“First, was unchecked democracy - the founders were absolutely afraid that the larger states might band together to overwhelm the smaller states...The second thing they were afraid of is that people might end up being persuaded by a charismatic candidate who was absolutely unqualified for the job. Or, given that a voter in South Carolina might not know anything about a candidate from Massachusetts, the Electoral College was designed to ensure that the best qualified candidate actually ended up winning or to prevent an unqualified candidate from essentially sneaking into the office.”

So, the Founding Fathers created the Electoral College, which can be found in Article II, Section I of the Constitution. The system that has sparked much debate, in modern times, over whether it is fair and effective or whether it should be altered.

Freshman Willa Roemer said “The Electoral College is inefficient as a way to decide the president. It means that a vote in a swing state, like Pennsylvania, matters more than one in a regularly blue or red state like Massachusetts or Oklahoma. I understand the logic and reasoning behind the Electoral College when it was founded but now we as a country have moved past the need for a middle man in our elections.”

Freshman Elias Baldwin agreed, stating “First of all, I think that the Electoral College is incredibly outdated, authoritarian, and meant to keep the ruling elite in power while continuing to advertise itself as a democracy or democratic republic. It completely trumps the system of democracy by ensuring that some people's votes matter more than others solely on where they live. I laughed to myself during the election when thinking about how stupid our predicament is where we are biting our nails over an election in which the leading candidate in winning by, at that time, 3 million votes.”

Freshman Charlotte Lin agreed with both Willa and Elias saying, “I honestly don't see the point of the Electoral College. It was created to make sure that the people didn't choose a president that was not capable, but it seems to limit the power of people's vote.”

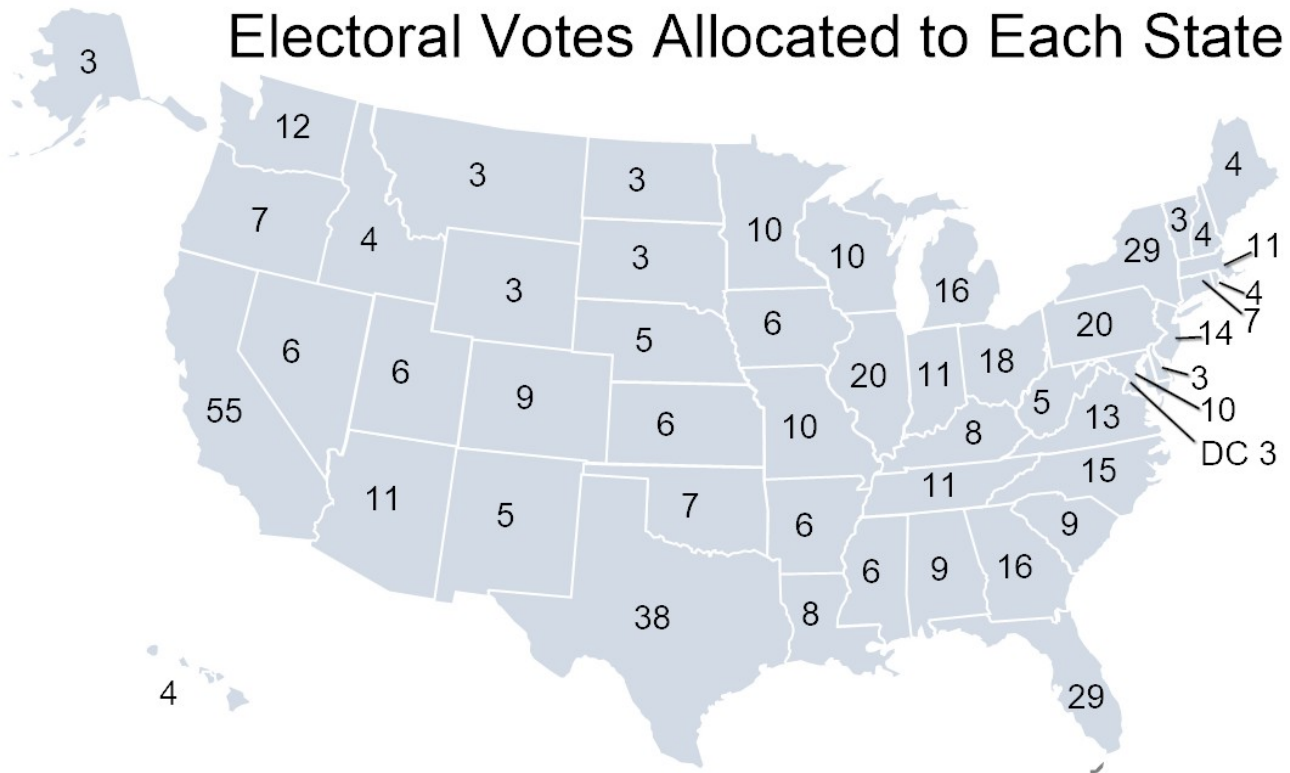
Students and teachers also expressed concerns about the possibility to win the electoral college, while losing the popular vote, as Donald Trump did in 2016, and George W. Bush did in 2000, and Benjamin Harrison did in 1888. Also, in the case of an electoral tie or lack of majority in the electoral college, the House of Representatives votes to determine the president, as was the case for John Quincy Adams in 1824 and Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876.

Mr. Staten did counter saying, “The Electoral College does have certain benefits. It ensures that a candidate doesn't win solely by appealing to population centers alone. It is designed to ensure that a candidate appeals to a broad coalition of states and people by making a presidential election essentially 50 state elections and not one national election. It protects the interests of the various states, and our system of federalism by making sure that a presidential candidate wins a wide majority across the country.”

Mr. Staten also mentioned, “Since 1960, when the Electoral College expanded effectively to its current form where you need 270 electoral votes to win, it has worked 93% of the time. And it is rare for a candidate to win the Electoral College to win with less than 300 electoral votes. So elections that may be close in the popular vote tend to not be close in the Electoral College.”

However, Mr. Staten did recognize some problems with the system of electing presidents. “The Electoral College does prioritize the votes of some states more than others. On the whole, votes in smaller states mean more because, well, there are more of them. It is possible to win a massive number of small unpopulated states and win the presidency despite losing the popular vote...you absolutely could win the Electoral College by winning 22% of the popular vote if you win the right states... Republicans have an inherent advantage because there simply are more rural, small states.”

Finally, and most potentially undemocratic, electors may choose to overturn their state’s popular vote. Explains Mr. Staten, “It is absolutely possible for the electors to get together and completely overturn the popular vote. That is, unfortunately, what President Trump is hoping to happen. However, many states have laws against "faithless electors" voting against the popular vote winner of their states.”



Editorial: D.C. Statehood Now!

By Ella Hankins, freshman, with Sadie Greenhalgh, sixth grade and Mayowa Akinsanya, seventh grade, contributing

Washington D.C. was founded in 1790 and remains one of the only places in America that is not part of a state, instead holding the title of the nation's capital. This fact remains controversial. After all, it means that the citizens of the District of Columbia lose certain privileges that are only given to Americans who live in states. This unjust behavior leaves many, especially those who live in D.C., to call for statehood, including many members of the Washington Latin community.

There is one major problem the District of Columbia faces due to a lack of statehood, a problem that is printed on the back of every D.C. license plate.

"We get taxed and get no representation in the senate, which is unfair," said 6th grader, Madelyn Zeller.

Unfortunately, Madelyn is correct. The District of Columbia has no representatives in the Senate, and in the House of Representative is only given a delegate, currently Eleanor Holmes Norton, who has no voting ability.

Mr. Wills, the 7th grade Ancient Civilization teacher, explained how unjust the lack of representation is, saying, "The residents of DC pay more federal taxes than several U.S. states, yet lack the representation in the U.S. Congress. Statehood would solve this dilemma."

Director of Athletics and DC History teacher Mr. Eleby El also noted that D.C. has "No control of budget [and] no vote for war."

Freshman Mackie Boone, pointed out that, "Our demographically diverse city deserves a voice!"

Another freshman, Lauren Boyer, wants representation, but is also worried about D.C. becoming a state, pointing out "D.C. is the size of a city... and if we did receive statehood we would have a lot more power compared to others, just because we are so small."

Although D.C. has a small population, the District of Columbia, with 711,571 people, has a larger population than Wyoming or Vermont, according to the 2020 census. Wyoming is the least populated with 572,381. Then, Vermont comes in 2nd place with 627,180.

Why isn't D.C. a state?

As Mr. Eleby El explained, "D.C. is not a state because when the constitution was written the framers made sure it did not have too much power by giving congress control of DC."

This can be shown in Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 of the Constitution which states, "The Congress shall have power to ...exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular states, and the acceptance of congress, become the seat of the government of the United States."

As founding father James Madison explained in the 43rd Federalist paper, "Without it, not only the public authority might be insulted and its proceedings interrupted with impunity; but a dependence of the members of the general government on the State comprehending the seat of the government, for protection in the exercise of their duty, might bring on the national councils an imputation of awe or influence."

Essentially, the founder fathers were afraid of two things happening if the District of Columbia became a state. One, citizens of D.C. barging into Congress and causing "its proceedings [to be] interrupted", because it is just SO easy to break into Congress and start demanding things. The second reason the Founding Fathers cited was that congress people would feel obligated to side with D.C. representatives, since they were on D.C. land.

Secondly, how do you make Washington D.C. a state?

The Constitution requires a federal district, which is currently the title for D.C., but there are a few ways around this problem. Congress could pass a constitutional amendment declaring D.C. statehood. Congress could also pass a law that changed D.C.'s city lines, and made it so that the mall was separate from the rest of the city. This way the mall, where no one lives, would be the new federal district and the rest of D.C. could become an official state. After all, according to the Constitution the only requirement for the district is that it "not [be] exceeding ten miles square."

However, getting Congress to pass either law would be difficult.

"Republicans probably wouldn't like [DC Statehood] as much because DC is Demorcatc," commented seventh grader Ruby Churches. Mr. Eleby El also agrees noting it might be hard to pass statehood without a majority of Democrats in the Senate to begin with.

If D.C. were to become a state, then two senators, who would most likely be Democrat, would join Congress. This would mean the Democrats would be more likely to win issues since laws usually pass by mere votes. For example, between the years 2016 and 2020 there were 13 bills in Congress that resulted in a 50-50 tie. Mike Pence, the vice-president, cast the tie breaking vote on these bills following the Constitutional protocol.

Although D.C. might not have statehood, at least not yet, according to Mr. Wills that doesn't mean there hasn't been progress.

“Over the past 30 years or so, the DC statehood movement has made much progress getting this topic on the nation's radar screen as a serious topic to be explored by the U.S. Congress. DC Statehood has even made its way on the platform of the Democratic Conventions over the past few years. I think that it's going to take more efforts by the leaders of the Democratic party to make DC statehood a real possibility.”

When asked if he thought this political moment for statehood felt different or was it just another brief “phase” of discussion, Mr. Wills had this to say, “As a DC native, I can't say that this political moment for DC statehood feels different than in previous years. There was much excitement and support for DC statehood during the Clinton years, and also during the Obama years. However, the DC movement lost momentum after these administrations were no longer in power. Now, with President-elect Biden and Vice-President elect Harris coming into power in January 2021, the DC statehood movement will, once again, have the strong support from the leadership in the White House.”

However, like we have seen in the past, even with strong support in the White House, there is no guarantee.

“Can this new administration persuade the U.S. Congress, particularly the U.S. Senate, to hold hearings on this topic? And, will the leadership of this current U.S. Congress take an official vote on the issue of DC statehood on the floors of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate?” said Mr. Wills.

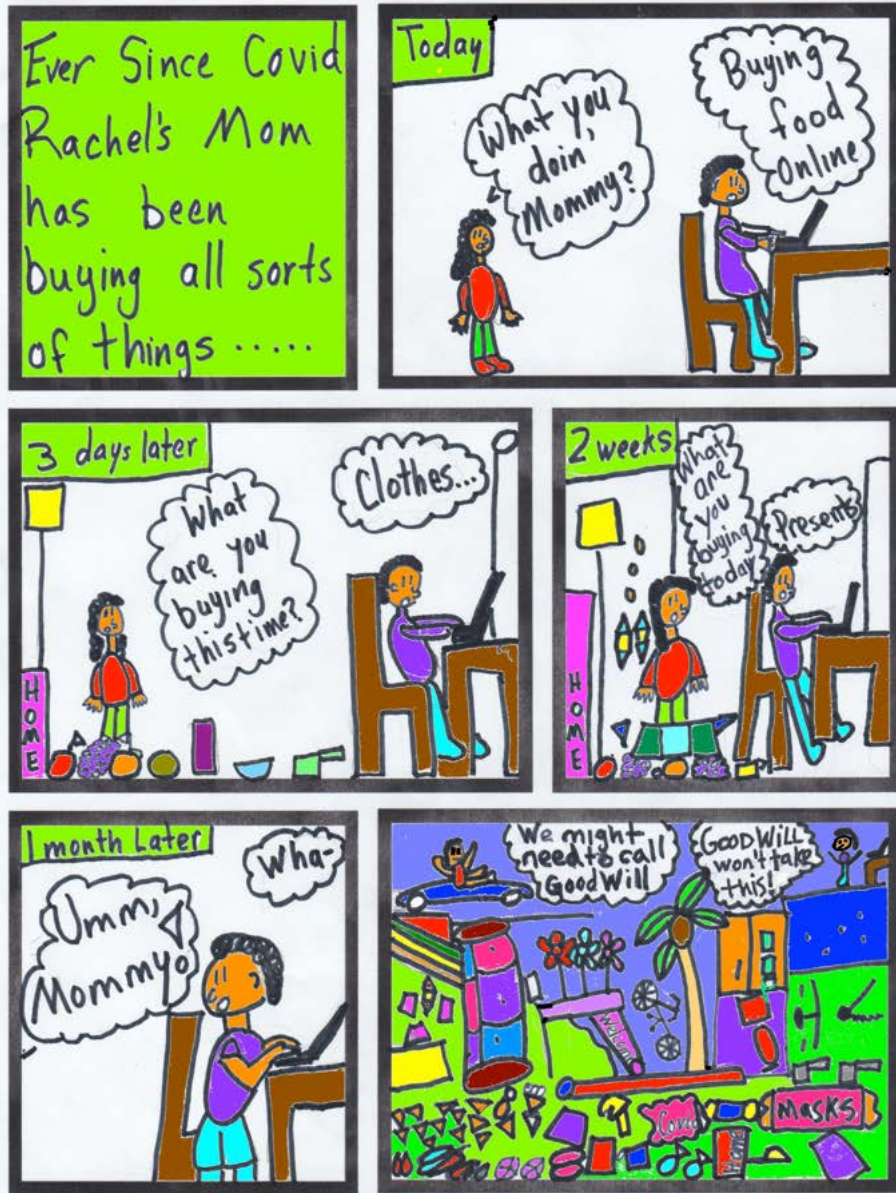


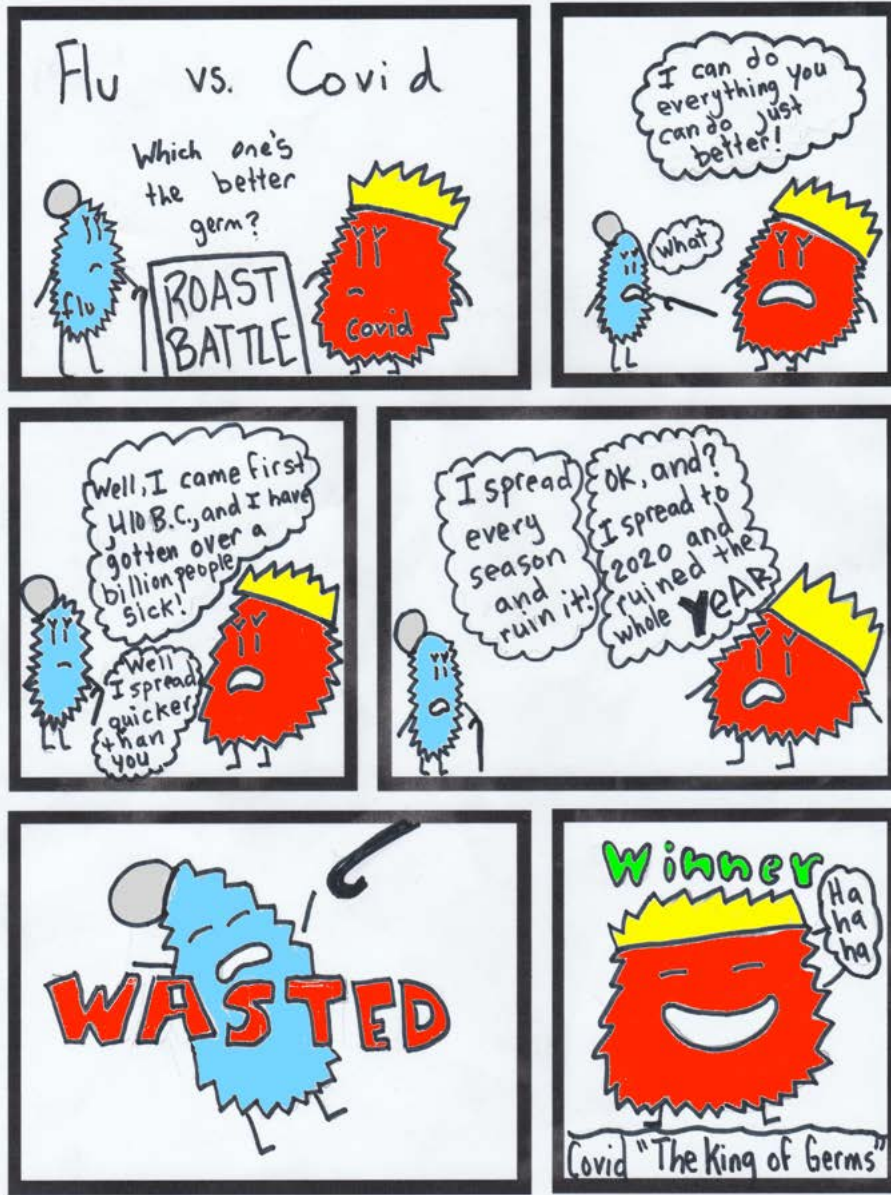
Left: Ella Hankins' D.C. Statehood Shirt

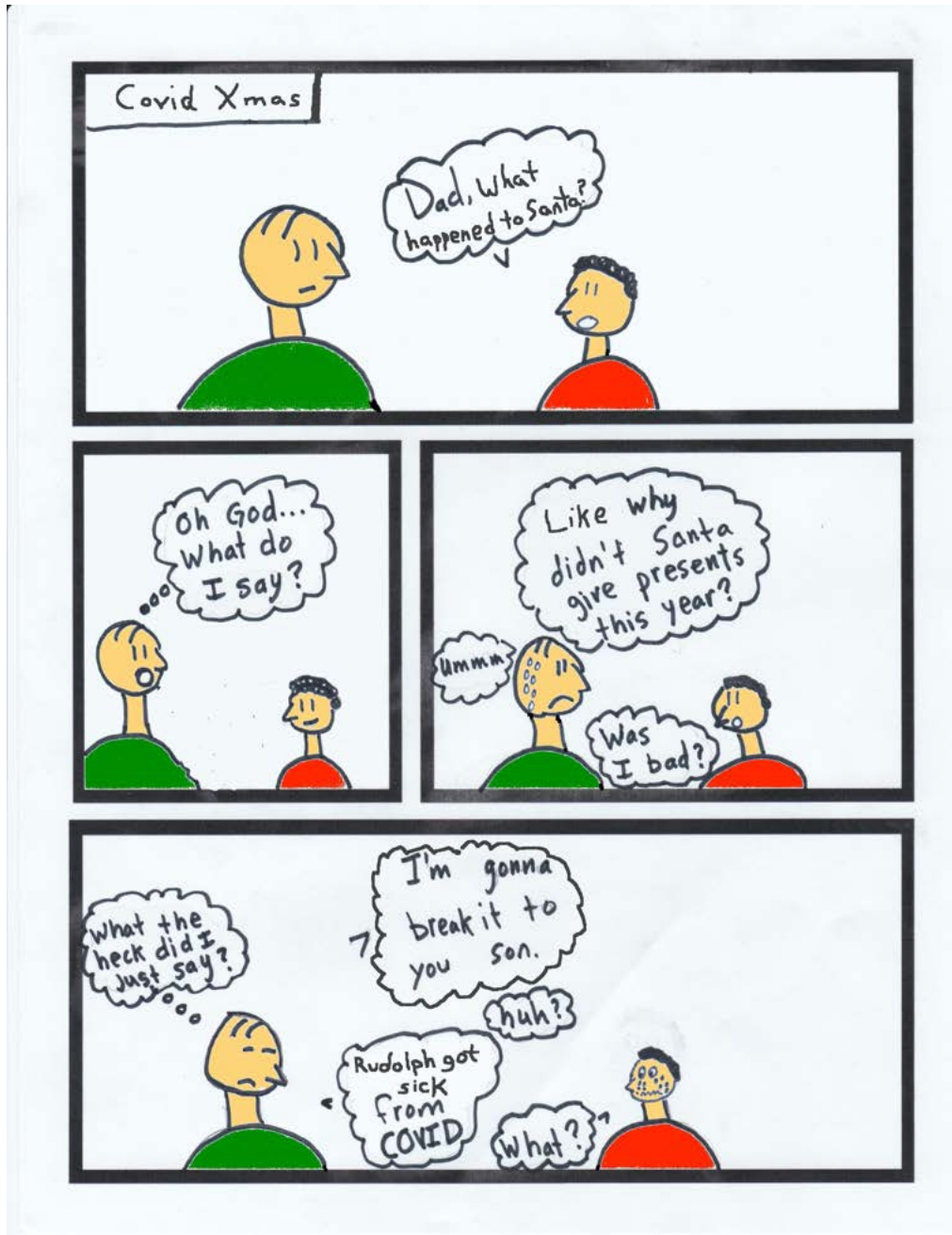
Right: A sign showing support of DC statehood

Cartoons

By Ruby-Rae McCants, eighth grade







Word Search

By Claire Campbell, eighth grade

WORDS TO FIND

Gingerbread Gifts Santa Noel
Sleigh Candy Cane Elf Cookies
Joy Snow Holiday

G	I	N	G	E	R	B	R	E	A	D	T	S	P	P	Q	H	I	L	A
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