SUMUS LEONES

May 2021

School at Our Homes Away From Home

By Zoe Edelman, senior

For much of this school year, most Washington Latin students have had a five second commute to school: from their beds to their desks for virtual learning. This presented an opportunity for some to conduct their Zoom classes from a distance- of up to 4,500 miles away.

Junior Giulio Benson is one such student. His family decided to go to Italy because they own property and his grandmother lives there. He spent the entirety of the third quarter, as well as some of the second, living there. Due to the six hour time difference, Giulio's "typical Zoom school day consisted of starting after lunch and either finishing before or after dinner."

He wasn't alone in this, as the rest of his family was also operating on the East Coast time zone. They similarly compensated for the time difference by "splitting the work they had that day in two halves, working in the morning and meetings in the afternoon." For Giulio, the hardest part about the time difference was asynchronous Wednesday work, "I would often get the work late in the day because teachers couldn't post it the night before."

The time difference is also a challenge for eighth grader Nick Kempf, although he is three hours behind, in California. "I wake up at 4:45 in the morning. By advisory, it is still dark outside and doesn't get bright until around 6:45."

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A Goodbye from Zoe Edelman (pg. 20) The rest of his schedule is similarly strange, as Nick ends up eating lunch at 9:30 before going to sleep between 6:30 and 7:00. Thankfully, the rest of his family "is also on East Coast time, so they also have to wake up early and go to sleep early." Nick has been in California since winter break, and is living with relatives while their house in DC is being renovated. Despite the challenging time difference, Nick acknowledged some of the bright spots of California: "the beaches, space, and nice weather."

Senior Paola Lipton was also forced to adjust to an early wake up during the half of the school year she spent in Colorado. "I moved to Colorado with my family to kind of get away from the city and see family that lived up there." Her typical day was long- especially since she began a job three days a week, which ended late in the evening.

The rest of her family had very different circumstances from her own, however. "My dad just retired from the Army and my siblings were able to start school in person over there," Paola explained. Her mom ended up commuting "between Colorado and DC because she's a trauma surgeon in Fairfax." In the end, Paola loved her time spent in Colorado. "It's hard to say which part was the best. I would say my top three were watching the sunrise, milky way and shooting stars, and strenuous -ish hikes." She also was able to practice driving in many different circumstances, including "snow, rain, windy highways, unstable terrain, narrow roads, cliff sides, deer and cows."

Although some of Latin's students have enjoyed the chance to do school from far away, this change may be rendered impossible next year thanks to Mayor Bowser's April announcement that she believes that DC public school students would be fully in-person for the 2021-2022 school year. Due to this, it seems that school from a different time zone is, like many unorthodox changes which occurred this year, is an exclusive feature of the 2020-2021 school year.



Images taken by Paola Lipton in Colorado.



Is Hybrid School Cool?

By Oluwamayowa Akinsanya, seventh grade

Students from grades fifth through ninth have been back to campus doing hybrid learning since April. Are students comfortable? Is it enjoyable while still being socially distanced?

Seventh grader Kai Pfeuffer says, "We're typically two-four feet (away), not ideal." But he does also mention that he feels relatively comfortable because his family is vaccinated. And when asked about adjusting to hybrid he responded, "I believe that due to the similar schedule and work level, I do not find it any more difficult. Virtual allows us to get to know people better."

Another seventh grader, Josie Le Mon, agrees about the hybrid change being more enjoyable especially because of more interaction. "Definitely, because I get to see my friends, and I understand the work better when my teachers are there to answer any questions I have." Additionally she added, "The class size is the same for both, but during in-person you get to interact with other students in your pod more than during virtual."

Willa McCartney, seventh grader answers, "We can do a little bit more physical stuff, like Jeopardy in science. We can see the whiteboard and it's also good to see friends. When we are virtual, it's like go to this website, do this. I would say it's more interesting activity wise."

Fifth grader, Daphna Soskis agrees. "I think hybrid learning is much more interesting than Zoom, simply because we are actually doing something other than staring at a screen listening to a teacher talk. Half the time in virtual school, I am zoned out, staring at the computer, but when I am in person school, it is much more exciting and I can tell you I have not zoned out yet." And when asked about adjusting she commented, "The hardest part is having to wake up at 6:30 in the morning, but other than that the issues are pretty small, for example wearing two masks can be a real struggle. Today my face got so itchy because of my masks but I could not take them off."



Freshman enjoying their breaks.

A Bite into Lunch

By Sophia Smith, eighth grade

School returned on Monday, April 12th. Since then, students from 5th-9th grade spent 2 days a week on campus to learn in-person with their classmates and teachers. Along with a hybrid learning came a unique challenge with in-person lunch. In order to eat, people have to take their masks off, increasing the chances of spreading COVID. How can the Latin community prevent COVID transmission while still giving kids lunchtime? In practice that means eating outside, kids sitting far apart, organized pods, weekly COVID testing and replacing masks as soon as all are done eating.

According to Ms. Fleming, the Director of Operations, "Lunch will be outside to the greatest extent possible (weather permitting), and students will be of course allowed to remove masks to eat and drink at lunchtime but will have to be very mindful of distancing from others while unmasked and will be asked to replace their masks as soon as they are done with lunch."

Before school went virtual, kids had recess on the field and lunch in the MPR. Now with the same location for both, kids can choose for themselves when recess ends and lunch begins.

"[Today] I had lunch before many other people during recess because I wanted to finish quickly and hang out with everyone else," explained eighth grader Belle Steinberg.

Others disagree, and believe playtime comes first, then food.

"Recess is first. You're doing it wrong," claimed eighth grader Lucia Claire.

Lunch on the field is certainly different from lunch at home in quarantine.

"It's nice and it's a change from being stuck inside all day," noted Pilar Gomez.

Most kids seem un-bothered or even unaware of taking off their masks to eat.

When asked about if she was comfortable taking masks off to eat Belle Steinberg replied, "I'm very good about keeping my mask on at restaurants when I'm not eating, so I think I'll be okay at school."

"I think as long as they're far away it should be fine. And they're not like yelling across the room or coughing in people's directions," Pilar Gomez explained.

"If it's outside, I'm okay with [taking off masks during lunch] as long as we're not too close," agreed eighth grader Max Aaron.

Currently, students have around 45 minutes on the field split between lunch and recess. Before, they had 45 total minutes too. With new struggles with masks on the field, some kids want more time.

"I didn't have enough time," claimed Maccabi Epstein. "It was difficult to take my mask on and off. I feel like lunch should be extended."

"I don't know. I hope I don't get COVID," said Michael Tichy.

Unsurprisingly, Michael's feelings are shared by many during lunchtime.

"My lunch is going well," Henry Dunne explained. "I'm having lunch on the bleachers. Well, on the bleachers it's pretty cool. Well, the weather impacts me eating outside because if it rains, that would be bad. It would have to rain like a drizzle and then I would be like 'I'm out of here," 8th grader Henry Dunne narrated comically.

"Well, if it's raining, then I think we could just be in the tents, but if there's a lightning storm then I think we should be inside," says Max.



Eighth graders eating lunch.

Life After the Vaccine

By Nadia Durham and Raigan Watson, eighth grade

Now that the COVID-19 vaccine is available to people 12 years of age and older, more and more people have been getting vaccinated. We've interviewed faculty and students of the Latin community on their lives after family members were vaccinated.

Mr. Green, seventh grade English teacher

"I feel much less stressed and a great sense of relief now that I am fully vaccinated. My wife is nearly fully vaccinated as well, and my daughter had COVID in October -- so even though my son is not vaccinated and never had it, we feel like there is a healthy amount of immunity in our home. We still take the basic precautions, but that everyday anxiety has basically vanished. If we see friends, we see them outside. If they are all fully vaccinated, we will relax on the masks and explain to our daughter why we feel safe doing that. We are not eating at indoor restaurants or doing much indoors except what is necessary, like getting groceries or picking up dinner, coffee, and things like that."

Aitana Camponovo, eighth grader

"Since my parents got their vaccines, although there haven't necessarily been any major changes, I've noticed they've been a lot more relaxed. Our routines are still the same as they were before they got their vaccines, except now they have more freedom to go places. For instance, just recently, because my mom had gotten her shots, she was able to go on a business trip for her job without any anxiety for COVID-19. Although because of the pandemic we haven't been hanging out with too many people in general, my parents getting the vaccine does definitely help clear any potential anxieties!"

Ms. Kolb, eighth-grade algebra teacher

"After receiving the first vaccine, I felt as though I could breathe again, but nothing changed in the way I lived my life. I continue to wear a mask when outside my home except at my daughter's house. After the 2nd vaccine I began to think about planning for the future; thinking about taking small trips and seeing family outside of DC. I am still wearing a mask but have now seen neighbors who are also vaccinated without our masks on outside. I still have not invited anyone inside without a mask. All of the adults in our bubble will be fully vaccinated by April 23, but my granddaughter cannot get vaccinated as she is too young, so we are not mingling maskless inside. I am less worried but still want to be respectful of others. I am still not ready for indoor restaurant dining, but I have adjusted to returning to school."

Roya Nock, eighth grader

"Yes, I definitely think life has changed since my parents got vaccinated. Even though it was just my mom who got vaccinated, it is better than having neither of my parents being vaccinated, and us still being high risk. My parents are definitely more free with who I hang out with. Since my mom is the highest risk in the family, we don't have to be as safe."

Brooke Roberson, eighth grader

"I do feel as if life has been different since my parents got vaccinated. I remember this time last year when we were all wondering when the pandemic would end or when there would be a vaccine available. My mom works in health care and every time a person would possibly come in with COVID, I was worried. But now, I don't worry as much as I did. My parents getting the vaccine has made me start thinking about my life after the pandemic. I guess in some ways it's given me hope. Going back to school right now wouldn't be ideal for me. Even though I miss my classmates, I would rather start school next year."

Mr. Birkenhead, theater teacher

"My life has definitely changed since my wife and I got the vaccine. The best thing, by far, about being vaccinated has been seeing Latin students, fellow teachers, and staff members again. It makes such a difference to see someone in the flesh, to be in their actual, physical presence. I've been surprised by how emotional it's been to reconnect with members of our community face-toface. It's a reminder of how precious this community really is. I am a little less anxious than I had been, although I won't truly be able to stop worrying until my daughters and (everyone else!) are vaccinated, as well. But we are now venturing out a little more, going to the grocery store and places like that. Seeing our friends and family members after so long has been a real joy. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it's that the people in our lives are to be treasured and never taken for granted. We are social beings, and I can't wait until we can all fully socialize again"



Freshmen Ella Hankins (left) and Mackie Boone (right) getting their first COVID vaccine shots.

Sumus Leones

The Admission Decision

By Niamh O'Donovan and Sophia Smith, eighth grade

The end of the school year is approaching and many eighth graders are making decisions about which high school to attend. With the admissions process finished, the only step left to complete is to weigh out the benefits of leaving for something new.

Applying to a different school might be intimidating for some, but in hindsight, for many, there is not much to stress about.

"It wasn't as hard as I thought it would be," said eighth grader Cate Shepherd, who decided to apply to School Without Walls this year. "You didn't have to write an essay or take a test. You had like a five minute interview that you had questions to prepare for."

Without the standardized admissions test or PARCC scores this year due to Covid-19, getting into School Without Walls was a matter of getting a high GPA and a bit of luck.

"You send in your grades," eighth grader Nick Kempf explained. "And then they check your grades. And if they think you're a good student or something then they interview you. And then everyone interviewed goes into a lottery. And gets put on a waiting list or gets admitted."

Clarke Oglesby is heading to Duke Ellington School of the Arts. She said, "[I applied for] Dance and Literary Media/Communications. [The auditions] were all virtual. They went fine. We had to do physical stuff for dance, but we just had to talk to the judges for LMC. There was an interview and call back for LMC, and two auditions and one or two callbacks for Dance. There were a lot of essays too, and I had to make sure I didn't sound immature or insane. I had to make them like me."

Some students think that high schools, like School Without Walls, have relatively more freedom. Washington Latin, on the other hand, seems more supportive to them, especially when it comes to choosing a college.

"Things I like about Walls: no uniform, open lunches and it's on a college campus (George Washington University)," listed Nick Kempf, an eighth grader. "Things I like about Latin: I'm already there, got some friends, I think it's better in terms of making sure students are feeling okay at school. I know Latin has good college counseling. I don't know about Walls. And they both have Chinese and Latin," added 8th grader Nick Kempf.

When asked about what she looked for in a high school, eighth grader Claire Campbell's response was clear and concise: "A big school with good sports, and a good education." She added that going to a new high school could be a great way to "branch out and try something new." However, she also commented, "[Washington Latin] has a good support system and all of the teachers are very nice and understanding. I would miss how much of a community Latin is and how close everyone is." In the end, Claire ultimately decided to go to Walls.

Some students just appreciate the chance to do something new, or be someone new.

"I liked the fact that [School Without Wall] has a baseball team. Another appealing factor is doing new things in new places. And you have a chance to rebrand yourself," explained Wesley Freed, an eighth grader, leaving for Walls. "I will miss all my friends. I will make new ones and keep in touch (with ones staying at Latin), but it will be hard not to see people that often."

Oliver Paterson, an eighth grader staying at Latin, explained his decision, "I don't have anywhere else to go and I don't want to leave my friends behind."

Socially, moving to a whole new school can be enticing or frightening, depending on the person. But it can also open a door to some previously unoffered opportunities.

"I really wanted to meet new people, and that was probably the biggest factor in my decision," explained Josie McCartney, a Latin alumna and freshman at School Without Walls, "I also really liked the extensive course offering that Walls has. I could take many more classes at Walls than I could at Latin which I loved. At Latin, you can advocate or ask for new classes to be made, but that seemed a bit complicated... One more thing is the Walls partnership with GW. I liked that it was going to be very accessible and free to take college classes if I wanted to during the summer, for a semester, or even become a full-time college student in junior and senior year. "

It's especially hard to make a choice when students can't shadow inside the buildings of prospective new high schools. Many worry that if they leave Washington Latin they'll miss the community and administration.

"I really liked the teachers and the administration at Latin," remembered Josie, "I know that the administration is very hardworking and organized and that's very rare, especially in public schools where the administrations don't have as much freedom or options. I liked the community and energy of Latin that I had grown so used to over the past four years. Latin also had better sports programs than Walls."

With everything to consider, a commitment to one high school is harder to make than ever. A few students are trying to research their options until the very last minute to make sure they don't regret whatever they choose.

"I have not decided. The deadline is May 2nd," explained Cate Shepherd as she waited until the final moment to make her choice. In the end, Cate decided to stay at Washington Latin for high school.



Middle schoolers playing in their uniforms on the field. For some, who choose to leave Latin, it will be one of the last times they'll be forced to wear polos.

A Right to Bear Arms?

Students Debate Gun Ownership in Washington, D.C.

By Oscar Murray, eighth grade

Gun violence in America has been an issue of much controversy and conversation over the years, with two sides clashing over tradition and safety. But caught in the crossfire are the students. People who are not in any decision making position, however are arguably the most affected: the students and teachers growing up and working in a gun-riddled America. And, nowhere is the debate as potent as Washington, D.C., because the city is where gun control legislation is being actively debated. Students here had a lot to say about gun laws.

Some felt gun control might not solve crime.

Eighth grader Jada Briscoe said, "If there wasn't a problem there wouldn't be gun violence. The law isn't perfect, but guns aren't the problem, people are."

While the United States government could regulate guns more, that will not necessarily wipe out gun violence in this country. Eighth grade history teacher, Mr Byrd said, "I do believe this country has a gun problem, not with ownership, but a gun problem in general. Whether it's legal or illegal ownership. There are too many mass shootings and other instances of gun violence. I think it stems from this country's unhealthy obsession with violence and guns. Violence is embedded in the history and culture of this nation."

Jada and Mr. Byrd said that as well as new regulations, gun owners would need to change their ways as well. And that this may be hard to do because of American culture.

Now, there were mixed opinions on whether or not people should be able to legally own any type of gun they might want. 61% of people think that there should be a ban on Assault Rifles, while only 24% percent of people in the US think there should be a ban on handguns. (according to News Gallup)

While most people thought that under certain circumstances they would be able to own a gun, some people thought that the criteria should be stricter. Some, like ninth grader Lauren Boyer, thought that no regulation should be necessary. "People should be allowed to own guns. They are a reasonable force to use when defending yourself. I'd suggest handguns."

Eighth grader Sophia Smith, thought that some people should be able to own guns, but regulations should be tight. "I can understand why people would want a gun, but they definitely do way more harm than good.. there should be much heavier regulations."

Mr Byrd, however, thought that no guns at all should be necessary. "I don't believe anyone should own a gun, especially assault rifles. I don't even think police should carry guns. There has to be a way to police a community without guns. People become too dependent on solving problems with guns and violence, rather than dialogue."

He echoes the voices of many residents of Washington, D.C. wanting very strict regulation. In 2008, the Supreme Court overturned Washington, D.C.'s 30-year old ban on owning handguns.

While handgun opinions were mixed, the opinions on assault rifles were largely negative. For example, Boyer, who had said that people should be able to own handguns for self defense, said "ARs have history in military usage, so I think that they'd be best suited for that only. Otherwise, I see no other usage for them unless someone wants to collect guns or show their AR off to people."

Some, such as eighth grader Wes Freed, liked that gun regulations were strict in Washington, D.C. because, "I think it is helpful because people won't get shot. Also, I just feel like it is dangerous around a gun."

Mr Byrd supported strict gun laws in Washington. "I do believe this is helpful. I realize in this country, guns will probably never be outlawed or banned, but at least stricter gun laws can help curb violence. I think background checks, no open carry, and more restrictive gun laws can decrease the amount of gun violence in this country."

Some thought that there was some difference between gun ownership in urban vs rural locations. Jada Briscoe said, "I think in rural settings, people are more likely to use a gun to hunt, and in the city they are more likely to want it for safety. I would encourage rural gun ownership probably more because in the city it's easier to hurt someone." This echoed the thoughts of a few others, thinking that owning a gun for sport is more understandable.

Lots of the gun violence in the United States stems from the Second Amendment, which states that. "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

This has a lot of controversy on how it should be interpreted.

Some thought it should be followed word for word, and others thought it should be scrapped entirely. Lauren Boyer said, "I would interpret the 2nd amendment as the right to own/bear arms, simple and justifiable. "I think that the handling in practice now needs to be less harsh on those whose guns are in the right hands."

However, some, like Mr Byrd thought it should be changed, and not interpreted strictly, because it was outdated and did not apply anymore. "I don't think the 2nd amendment should be strictly interpreted. The entire Constitution has been up for interpretation since its inception. It has been misconstrued and manipulated to fit a particular agenda. I don't think the Constitution should be strictly interpreted because it was and still is considered a living, breathing document, meaning it can and should be updated to fit the needs of the country and its people based on the times. That's why there are so many amendments."



Former upper schoolers standing against gun violence on the field in April of 2018.

Anti-Asian Hate Crimes

By: Lydia Park, eighth grade

Throughout the duration of COVID-19, the reported rise in hate crimes against people of the AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) community has increased by over 150% in the US, according to an analysis done by the *Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism,* at California State University, San Bernardino.

A recent crime happened in Georgia on the 16th of March, where six Asian and two white women were shot and killed at two spas in Atlanta.

When asked about her reaction to the shootings, Junior Kayla Park, stated, "Initially, I was sad because shootings are obviously terrible, but I think it was a day later that I really processed that it was a hate crime against Asians. I was angry, frustrated, and sad because the women who died that day reminded me a lot of my mom and my grandparents... Years of the hyper-sexualization of Asian women led to this specific shooting. In general, racism causes people to be fearful and prejudiced, and sometimes people act on those things."

Chinese language and U.S. government teacher, Mr. Liu, had a different approach to the shootings. He mentioned, "In addition to sadness for the victims, I wanted to know more about the facts, so I could try to protect myself and other Asian Americans. I have family scattered across the country and wanted to know how much risk we might be in and what could be done."

Many have agreed that they feel like racism towards AAPI has been normalized in the U.S. when former President Trump called COVID-19 the "Kung-flu" and the "China Virus," and the long history of racism against Asians in America.

Senior LiQian Shoag shared some of her experiences as to why she thinks racism against Asian Americans has been normalized, "almost every Asian American has a story from growing up in America where friends or classmates have said something offensive. They usually laugh at it... and it has been normalized for them since they were kids."

LiQian is not alone in her experiences, Mr. Liu mentioned some thoughts about his experiences, "As an Asian American who has lived all his life in the United States, what I have seen is that many in our community believe racism against us is often minimized or treated as a joke. I remember confronting a comedian at a bar after he made a racist Asian joke and his response was 'what's the big deal?" Mr. Liu even pointed out, "It's possible that the Atlanta shooting and the greater attention being paid to attacks against Asians may be a turning point in our culture of what is acceptable. The answer has yet to be determined."

With many people in the AAPI community wanting change, Ms. Tse, Latin's Director of Finance, commented that she thinks this change could possibly reduce hate crimes against Asian Americans in the future. She recommends "speaking up and sharing the impact of what is happening rather than being quiet." Tse hopes people will move "to intervene actively if you see something happen (not just taking a video but calling the police first or acting with other bystanders to intervene if safe)."

At Latin, there has been an effort to educate people about the experiences of AAPI students and staff in the Latin community. They are also trying to create an environment that will be safe and open for Asian Americans to share their thoughts and experiences.

With the Latin community, America is also taking a step towards educating and protecting AAPI from hate crimes. According to the *Los Angeles Times* on April 22, 2021 the Senate passed a bill that will aim to decrease the reported amount of AAPI hate crimes fueled by COVID after seeing the violence that has occured over the pandemic.

"[The] AAPI community has not made enough noise or gotten enough support/attention to generate the push-back or increase the cost of inappropriate behavior or language against the community," added Ms. Tse.



Image from a Stop Anti-Asian Hate Protest in March 2021, at McPherson Square.

Senior Year: The Show Must Go On

By Nile Thaxton, senior

After a few more weeks of configuration and solidification, senior events such as bonfires, prom, and the long awaited graduation ceremony, have been scheduled.

After attending a meeting recently about events happening, seniors now know times and dates for prom, the senior cookout and bonfire, graduation rehearsal and valediction, and graduation. The dates in order are May 21st, June 7th, June 11th, and June 14th.

Seniors were excited by the chance to celebrate together in person.

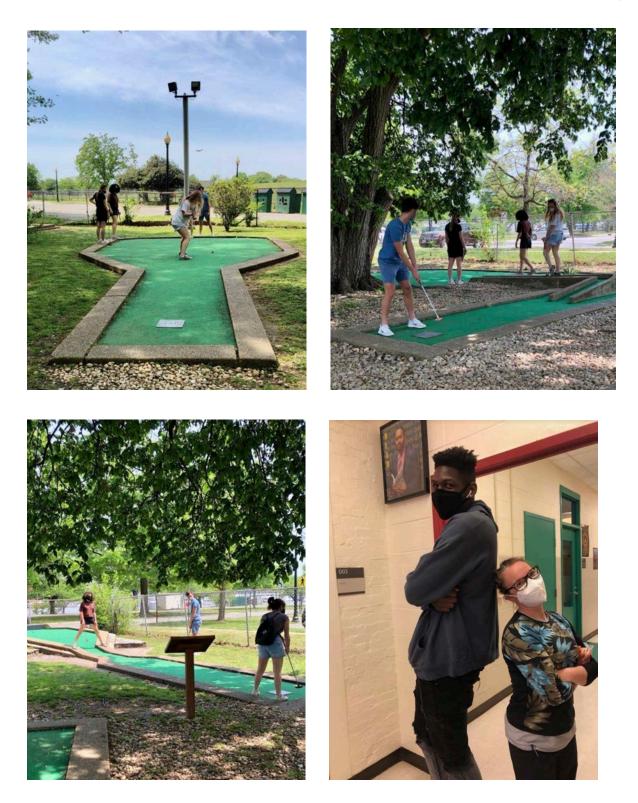
Nazareth Fisher gave his opinions on prom. "I'm glad we're able to bring dates, so it'll be fun going with my girlfriend. I think it'll be kinda weird to be on the field, but it's something."

Chima Ukaegbu, another senior, is looking forward to graduation. "With everything we've gone through this past year, being in virtual classes, I couldn't wait for graduation, especially now since our last quarter is near the end."

Chima also thinks it's great to take advantage of the time to meet in person too. "We've known each other spanning back for years, so not knowing what the future lies for us together, it's great to physically be with your friends".

Jada George is hopeful about the turnout of the upcoming senior bonfire. "Hopefully everyone who signed up shows up, and it'll be nice seeing everyone's face (covered at the nose of course)".

The seniors are all looking forward to finishing their high school tenure, however they'll take the time to come celebrate together. Each of their responses were positive about the senior events.



Seniors playing mini golf and Nazareth Fisher with Ms. Raskin.

Back to School Haikus

By Nick Kempf, eighth grade

Prepare your backpack Get your computer, and mask And water bottle

Wake up, can't sleep in Get ready, so you can catch The bus or metro

Social distancing Stay six feet apart during Class, recess, and lunch

Enslaved to clothing Blue, gray, white no hats in class Outerwear with patch

Memes

By Zinedine Herst, eighth grade

When the teacher says you're going back for hybrid learning. Your school supplies:



What students see during zoom class:



People who got COVID, but still don't wear mask:



A Goodbye from Zoe Edelman

During my time as a contributor and editor for Sumus Leones, I covered topics ranging from TikTok to Techless Tuesdays, current events to clubs, and elections to early applications. Not many newspapers out there would allow a student to cover so many niche, meaningful, or - quite frankly - random topics. After joining in 9th grade, Sumus Leones became a community I could rely on. Its members provided me with kind and needed edits, pushing me to be a better writer and leader. Through the hours spent brainstorming, interviewing, transcribing, writing, editing, and publishing, I became a more patient and thoughtful person. Thank you, Ms. Breitman, for your suggestions and support, and for always adding your nuanced opinion to the discussion. Thank you, readers, for inspiring and appreciating our words. Thank you, Sumus Leones staff, for your diligent and dedicated work. I will miss Sumus Leones, but I know I leave it in capable hands. Keep on writing!



Eighth grade graduation, 2017.