
SUMUS LEONES

March 2022

The End of Masks as We Know Them?

Aitana Camponovo, freshman

Starting on March first, Mayor Browser lifted the indoor mask mandate throughout DC —though it excludes schools, hospitals, public transportation, and other locations. As a result, Washington Latin has started to change their status-quo this spring, relaxing certain rules.

As compensation for not checking temperatures and handing out hand sanitizer at the door anymore, Ms. Fleming, the Director of Operations said, “I would ask that advisors have hand sanitizer or wipes available and remind students who have not used any recently to do so in Advisory. I would also appreciate [teachers] reminding students to wash or sanitize their hands before and after using the restroom or eating lunch.”

On Monday, the 28th of February, students were no longer required to have their temperature checked and given hand sanitizer when they enter every morning. Later, starting from March 7th students have been granted permission to be unmasked outdoors on campus.

“Being that the mask mandate has been lifted DC-wide, it’s a good first step to normalcy,” said Belle Steinberg, a freshman.

Starting from March 16th, all DCPS schools’ indoor mask

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mandate will have also been completely lifted. Where does that leave Latin?

When Liam Saxon, a freshman who enjoys going out for breaks was asked on what his initial opinion was regarding wearing masks outside, he informed, “Yeah [it’s a burden], though I think practicing with [masks] on actually makes you a better athlete,” he added, “as it increases your level of physical exercise while limiting your oxygen, but it was definitely a pain getting used to it. You’d get lightheaded and it’s not the greatest; I prefer without [them].”

After having worn masks for so long, some students felt neutral about this change.

“I’d say that it would be more refreshing, but safety-wise, I’m not sure,” said Kumel Tewelde, a freshman.

Could not wearing masks anymore really be a good thing? Or should Latin be even more relaxed with them like the other schools of DC?



Middle schoolers on Wellness Wednesday.

The High School Decision

By Oluwamayowa Akinsanya, eighth grade

It's decision time for eighth graders at Washington Latin, and this year has proved no different in spite of COVID-19 still impacting our lives. High school is on the horizon and the time to decide where to attend high school has come. Staying at Washington Latin for high school or going to a different school is a choice that will change their future. What is guiding students' decisions to leave or stay at Washington Latin and why?

Some students haven't made their choice of leaving or staying, but have been exploring other options including private high schools. Eighth grader Trey Tam remarked on parting from Washington Latin. "The reason why I am considering leaving Washington Latin is that I want to get a new perspective of the world, and be open to many different ways of education and people." He added, "I never really considered moving until this year, and Washington Latin is still an option for next year."

In comparison, Josie Le Mon said, "I haven't fully decided what to do for high school yet. I'm looking at Walls just to have my options open, but I want to stay in Latin because I really like the music program." She also mentions that her friends are in similar situations and their choices would influence hers.

A recently returned sophomore, Dylan Park, can relate. He left Latin for School Without Walls in ninth grade, but returned at the end of semester one. "When I initially left Washington Latin, it was mainly because most of my friends decided to leave. I also felt the fear of being in the same place for eight straight years, and I felt like I needed a change in environment."

What is causing most students to look at other options but not make the commitment? And could the need for change be a part of it?

Josie Le Mon commented that the community at Washington Latin and the programs she enjoys, like music, are benefits.

"I know the school and the teachers so it would not be a shocking transition," said Karinna Meier.

Similarly Trey Tam commented, "Some pros of staying are being able to get around the school easier, knowing many people in the building, so it would be easier to talk to people, and being able to extend my learning in certain subjects like being able to take two languages."

“In the month I've been at Latin, I feel more connected than I've ever felt at Walls.” Dylan Park shares. “I've realized that Latin has created such a unique learning environment that no other DCPS school can replicate.”

If the connection and community at Washington Latin is stopping 8th graders from making the decision, what is nudging them to explore other schools?

“I think some cons of staying are not getting a new learning experience.” Trey said. “Not meeting new people, and having the same reputation as long as you're there.”

Karina Meier answers identically, saying, “Some cons might be staying with the same people for a long period of time.”

She also added, “Some things that I want to do Latin does not provide.”

Josie Le Mon agrees saying, “The only con of staying in Latin that I can think of is just making sure that I will be able to find classes in high school that are interesting and challenge me.”

Park leaves some lasting advice for the 8th graders. “Teachers at Latin honestly care for your growth as a student and a person. So to all the rising freshmen I understand your urgency for a fresh start, and it could very well be for the best, but make sure to shadow and get a feel for wherever you go, and that the door to Latin will stay open.”

Science Fair, Yea or Nay?

By: Alice Pittard and Lydia Park, freshmen

Science fair is one of few projects every single American student has participated in at least once in their lifetime. At Washington Latin, it is required for students in fifth and sixth grade to complete a science fair project. Afterwards it usually becomes optional, although it depends on the science teacher. However, despite its consistency, the four month science fair process receives a lot of mixed feelings from participants.

Some students find the science fair process to be enjoyable and exciting. The winner of this year's sixth grade science fair, Francisco Blanco, commented that, "Science fair was fun because it allowed me to expand my knowledge on multiple topics."

Freshman Summer Romney agreed and added, "I love doing science fairs because you can research a topic you are interested in, and do fun experiments." She also mentioned that, "My favorite part of the science fair was being able to show off the project my sister and I worked hard on to the judges."

Teachers also find the science fair to be rewarding. Upper School science teacher Mr. Torrence mentioned, "I love watching students navigate the scientific process on an independent project of their choosing. As a result, some of them become experts on a super specific topic and end up teaching me things. My favorite part is learning from them as a result of this."

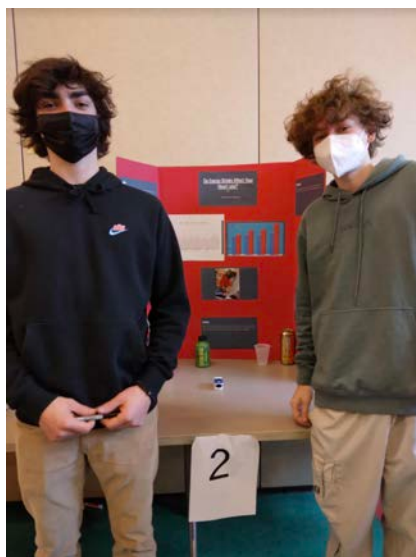
On the other hand, the science fair has received a lot of criticism because of its time-consuming and anxiety-producing components. Pilar Gomez, a freshman, stated that unlike what others have shared, "...it can also be really stressful, especially in the days leading up to the presentation."

Mr. Torrence added his perspective as a teacher, saying, "Keeping kids motivated and on track can be so draining. I can always see the end goal, but sometimes they can't see it and want to quit. They become frustrated or disengaged and I have to deal with that...now multiply that by sixty students!"

Ms. Dobler, the sixth grade science teacher, attests to the resources put into science fair: "We begin working on Science Fair in October, and students work on steps with due dates for four months. Students work on Science Fair as [their] only homework, and have in class days dedicated to this work as well. We spend about \$300 on boards and about \$70 on awards.

Normally we also buy breakfast, lunch, and coffee for the judges, but this year we did not have food due to [COVID].”

Overall, science fair has both its pros and cons, with each person feeling differently about it. The good news is that it is optional for most grades at Latin. So—after sixth grade—students can choose to participate if they love it; if they hate it, they don’t always have to be involved.



Honors Physics students doing their version of the Science Fair.

Committing to College and Admitting Advice

By Ella Hankins, sophomore

The first few months of school for seniors are notoriously stressful as they pull together transcripts, write essays, ask for recommendations, and finalize college lists. And then, just as seniors begin to recover, universities release their early decision and early action letters. For many, it is the most nerve wracking moment of their lives - and a rejection letter can lead to heartbreak and hysteria. Currently, the Class of 2022 is divided into two groups: those who have committed to their school and those remain undecided.

“I really wanted to go to a small liberal arts school because I like Latin a lot and the environment,” said senior Kayla Park, a future Pomona College student. “I think I do really well in small communities and small classrooms...Also diversity was very important to me. I’ve grown up in D.C. my whole life and there hasn’t been a lot of diversity other than Black and white. So I wanted to go to a college that had a little bit more Asians.”

At first, Pomona College, located in Southern California, was not on Kayla’s radar; she was only considering East Coast schools, “But then I visited Pomona [in August of last year] and I fell in love with it... I realized how important weather was for me... I didn’t consider that when I started looking for colleges and then I realized how much I loved the weather there and I was like, ok I want to go here.”

Sanjana Bhojwani has committed to New York University (NYU) this fall.

“I didn’t want to be in the DMV, but I didn’t want to be terribly far,” said Sanjana. “So, I chose New York because it’s a big city and I really wanted to stay in a city and have a big school... It is the biggest school I applied to in terms of population ... Latin’s quite small and I wanted a change. [Also,] it has several campuses so I can transfer back and forth if that’s something I’m interested in later.”

Unlike her classmates, Camsey Noonan has been committed to her school, Lafayette College, for months. Camsey was aware of her acceptance status in early December because of the POSSE scholarship program she was awarded.

“Posse is a full tuition scholarship. You go through three rounds of interviews to get chosen for the scholarship,” she said. “You have to commit to your school and do early decision. After that, you do one more interview. If you get in, you get in with a group of nine other people... And you meet once a week to bond with those people, so once you go to college you already have friends

and you have a really good support system. Your college counselor nominates you for it. I talked to my college counselor—it was Mr. O'Brien before he left—and that's how I got nominated for the scholarship.”

Camsey added, “I would say it's a fairly intense process. It's a group interview, individual, and then [another group interview]. And the group ones, you're working together with other people. And the individual is very similar to a normal interview process. Along with that, they have you write an essay at some point. So it's fairly intense, but the biggest hurdle is probably just how nerve-racking it is to put yourself out there.”

Some seniors, however, are not done with the college system.

Nia Mathews-Cox stated, “I've applied to all ten of my colleges. [So far] I've heard back from two that I applied to early action... I'm hearing from a couple this month. Most of them have to let students know by April 1st. It kind of depends - some wait until April 1st and some let you know earlier.”

“The first thing I was looking for was my major, [Classics]... Then I thought about the type of school I wanted to go to, the environment, if it was diverse, if it was a nice campus, things like that,” said Matthews-Cox. “Lastly, I thought about where it was located. I really was not worried about the location that much... As I narrowed down my colleges, I started looking at locations more.”

And Vivian Pittard mentioned, “I have done all my college applications, they're all submitted. And, I've heard from a few schools. Now I am mainly working on scholarships, research opportunities, and other special applications-honors programs.”

She “wanted a smaller college with a close knit community and strong relationships with professors. That's how I learn best. I'm a relationship driven person. I knew I wanted somewhere warm... looked for schools with my major [Environmental Science and Political Science]... [and] I wanted to stay on the East Coast... but nowhere in the DMV; ideal for me would be a six hour drive away.”

When asked about next school year, Nia and Kayla were thrilled about the many classes offered by their colleges. However, both were nervous about the social aspect; Nia is a self-described introvert and Kayla has had the same friend group since elementary school.

On the other hand, Camsey and Sanjana are excited to meet new people, but most nervous about losing Washington Latin's encouragement.

Camsey explained, “Latin is really a very supportive school academically. It’s really hard to fail here; people care about you a lot. College is a lot more self-directed.”

As an early parting gift to younger high school students, the seniors provided their best pieces of advice.

Sanjana advised, “[Applying to colleges is] not something you do for fun. [But] it’s important to remember that a lot of your classmates are going through the same thing as you do. And if you can celebrate their successes, then there are always moments to look forward to in the process.”

Nia wanted to remind students, “Big name colleges are not all that interesting...Don’t pick a college because you think other people are going to be super impressed by your choice. Pick a college you actually want to go to. It has nothing to do with them; it’s all about what you want to pick.”

Throughout the application process, Camsey reminded herself of her father’s message, “There’s not one right answer; there’s a series of right answers. And you just have to choose which right answer you want it to be...there’s more than one school where you will thrive. And you just have to choose which is the best right answer, not which is the only right answer.”

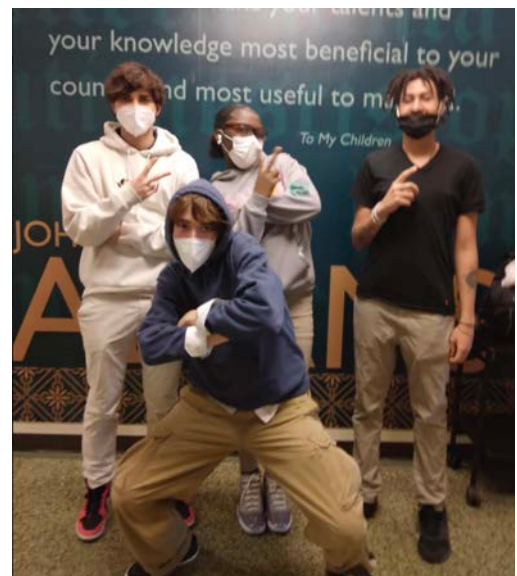
For freshmen and sophomores, Camsey added, they should “start building those relationships with teachers now. You need those [two] teacher recommendations...If you have a subject you’re really interested in, showing that, it means a lot to a teacher.”

For juniors, Camsey recommended doing work early. “Get as much done as you can early and you can go back and revise later. The people who I saw who were the least stressed in this process were the people who would dedicate time in September and October to write essays and do things that didn’t come for months...They’ve got a game plan versus people who are trying to do this last minute. It makes it a lot more stressful.”

And, as who left tasks to the last possible minute, Kayla could not agree more.

“DON’T PROCRASTINATE,” Kayla shouted. Then, she added laughing, “Don’t do what I did. I was originally going to apply to Pomona early decision and then I changed my mind three days before. And then I changed my mind [again] the day before. So I had a half finished college app that was due [soon]. I skipped school and just wrote for twenty-four out of twenty-eight. I got four hours of sleep... [It was] probably the most stressful thing [I have ever done].”

Vivian concluded, “Take the SAT early. If you have already done Pre-Calc, that’s all the math you need. Don’t let yourself forget all of it and then be stressing about it senior year... Start—over the summer between junior and senior year— watching Youtube videos to figure out what colleges you want to apply to... Try to get your common app done as early as possible, just in case problems come up. That [essay] is going to all your colleges, so it’s the most important one. Bother people to edit. Don’t have your parents’ edit it, bother teachers at Latin. They will do it.”



Students from the Class of the 2022

From the Trenches of COVID

By Isabelle Lee, Ruby Churches, and Willa McCartney, eighth grade

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of Latin families had the scare of testing positive. Although many cases were mild, getting COVID results in a ten-day isolation period of virtual work teachers and students had to endure.

Several teachers dealt with the challenge of extended absences due to COVID.

“My husband contracted COVID,” said Ms. Kolb, eighth grade math teacher. “He works at the Apple Store at Pentagon City. And even though all employees were required to be masked and all customers were required to be masked, they can see from a video that one of the people he was with, had a mask that was not fully engaged around their nose. He contracted it and got really sick, and then I got it from him.”

Others acquired COVID on vacation. Sixth grader Noah Ratzman said, “I got it in Florida, we went there to see my grandmother. No one wore masks, so I just got it there, started feeling a little sick.”

The experience of contracting COVID, raised the question of people’s symptoms, if any.

Eighth grader Stella Martin said “My taste and smell got really distorted, and it was horrible. Also I had a fever, and normal sickness stuff. And my taste and smell were really bad to the point that everything tasted disgusting.”

Contrasting to Stella’s experience, eighth grader Thalia Ehrenpreis said, “I was really lucky and got next to no symptoms with only a little bit of cold symptoms.”

Sixth grader Noah Ratzman said learning from home was “a little hard, especially because some of the days I wasn’t in Zoom, so I had to do the work kinda on my own. But I tried to do as most of it as I could, I was still feeling a little tired, but I did as much as I could.”

In Ms. Kolb's case, the symptoms were too severe for her to teach. “I didn’t teach at all. I was sick. I did one virtual lesson, but I was too sick to teach.”

Thalia took a unique stance, comparing it to seventh grade and “It was a nice break and I got to do everything asynchronous in my pj's so that's an up.”

After returning to school, many found getting back into the rhythm of things was hard.

Noah Ratzman, sixth grader described the experience of adjusting back to in-person learning, “A lot of the kids were like ‘Wow, it's Noah’, and they were asking me a bunch of questions. There were a lot of new things in the school, but I was glad to be back, but it felt kinda normal.”

Eighth grader Trey Tam commented, “Adjusting was a bit hard because I was kinda enjoying doing class in bed and waking up at eight.”

Thalia also had some doubts about returning, but she adjusted quickly. “Well I was very nervous that it would be weird to get back into routine, but turns out that I adapted back pretty quickly!”

Pippin Pops Up!

Sadie Greenhalgh and Zoe Wood, seventh grade

Every spring, Washington Latin puts on a musical, with this year's being Pippin. Pippin tells the story of Pippin, the son of Charlemagne, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in the year 810 AD. Pippin is a young man, who just finished at university and does not know what he wants to do with his life. He meets people along the way who help him try challenges such as war, politics and country life.

“We are always trying to improve the production experience for our students at Latin,” fifth and sixth grade theater teacher and the director, Mr. Baldwin stated. “[But, due to COVID] we are not able to pack in a full audience. So we are selling fewer tickets to allow for social distancing. Rehearsals run the same but in the love story portion of the play - there's no kissing! Maybe there's high fives instead. You'll have to come and see.”

When asked about masks, Mr. Baldwin explained, “D.C. Health requires masking and we are using the same clear plastic type as the OUR TOWN masks.”

“The biggest sacrifice I had to make was my social life,” expressed junior Genaba Diallo, who plays the role of the Lead Player, a dynamic musical narrator. “I had to cancel a lot of [plans with] friends and reschedule a lot of hangouts I couldn't make. I also had to sacrifice my time as a student and learn how to better manage my time with school work and rehearsals.”

“At the beginning of the year, rehearsals were about once or twice a week,” recalled seventh grader Rebecca Heim, who is a player. “But [when we were close to opening night] the rehearsals have been almost everyday.”

“I am a ballerina,” sixth grader Mia Jancachagua Espinoza expressed. “I take ballet class and these past months I had to miss out on some classes because of rehearsals.” Mia was a player in Pippin.

The performances for Pippin took place on Thursday, March 17, and Friday, March 18 at 7:00 pm, Saturday, March 19 at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm, and Sunday, March 20 at 2:00 pm.

Sophomore Caroline Ball said, “I think Pippin was the best musical that I have seen at Latin so far because it was more lively and fun.”



Editorial: Group Consequences

By: Ry Shapiro and Madelyn Zeller, seventh grade

Sometimes teachers and administrators implement consequences for large groups of students because of a few students' behavior. For example, if a few people in a class are loud, and the whole class receives extra homework. Another example would be the whole cafeteria being dismissed late because one table is dirty. The idea stems from the belief that punishing the entire group will cause the offender(s) to no longer misbehave for the benefit of the group. In practice, teachers had different feelings about the effectiveness of this.

“I feel group punishment makes the perpetrator feel so shameful that the hope is that they realize that the group saw you as an outcast and that they won't repeat the same offense,” fifth grade Latin teacher Mr. Starnes explained.

Mr. Green felt that group consequences could be occasionally effective due to positive peer pressure.

“I would say ideally consequences are directed towards the people committing the behavior, but when applying consequences to a whole group, it can help create group accountability,” said Mr. Green. “There are kids who may do this behavior but they don't realize that they're doing it or they don't think of themselves as the real cause of the issues.”

Mr Green assigned seating because lots of kids in his classes were talking with their friends. He said some were not talking as loudly as other kids were, so they didn't see themselves as the one needing the assigned seats.

Ms. Freeman, who has covered science, Latin, and math classes this year when teachers were on leave, had reservations about group punishment.

“My opinion on group consequences- I mean personally, I'm not really a fan of them...I'm personally more a fan of rewarding positive behavior than creating consequences for negative behavior,” 6th grade Latin teacher, Ms. Freeman, expressed. “When students are uncooperative or distracted, lean more into working with them one on one on why they are struggling to be on task. I think usually when students struggle to be engaged with class and struggle in class there is something going on in their life.”

Students also have strong opinions on group consequences; the majority negative.

“Normally this year at least we haven’t gotten in huge trouble but there have been some situations where kids are punished in a group,” eighth grader Karinna Meiers stated. “I think that if a few people do something wrong that the whole group shouldn’t be punished and people should be punished by themselves.”

“I feel very mad about this because it is a little rude for the teachers to scream at you for no reason,” fifth grader, Ravyn Montgomery-Vielmo stated.

“If a group is responsible, a group should be [punished]. I think [doing group punishment] would be a failure to see things on a smaller scale,” expressed Zane Wood, seventh grade.

Memes

By: anonymous eighth graders



Photo Gallery:



Middle schoolers pieing their teachers and playing dodge ball.