

LIVING BETWEEN TWO PANDEMICS

Julia Dunn, Science Leadership Academy, Class of 2021

Leaving the SLA school building during the afternoon of March 13th carried a new energy I hadn't felt before. Our classes had held about half of the usual attendance, and saying "bye" to friends and teachers was accompanied by an unusual "stay safe". There was much uncertainty, and the only thing I knew was that I wouldn't be going to Saturday morning crew practice the next day. Soon, the district announced that school would resume on March 27th. During those two weeks, I really enjoyed being out of school, and was grateful for a break from my usual busy routine. As it became clear that we would be at home for a longer period of time, I was curious to find out how the rest of my junior year would unfold.

Once the days and weeks began blending together, the only thing keeping me on track were our assignment deadlines on Sunday nights. I was in a position where I didn't have to take advantage of the grade-bump policies, as I was happy with my grades from the year. However, I knew that I had the capability and resources to complete assignments, so engaging with online classes was the right thing for me to do. As online learning progressed, and my motivation gradually diminished, I began to pick and choose the subjects that were interesting to me, and where I felt my voice would be valued. Personally, these subjects were math, physics, and history. The learning in these courses was still building and growing, and the assignments felt meaningful. Receiving feedback from teachers was also especially important to me, as it continued the individual connections that we had cultivated through the year.

With an excess of unused time at home, I was able to read books, listen to podcasts, and watch documentaries and movies that had been on my list for months. I taught myself to bake, sew on a machine, and make cocktails for my family's happy hour as well. Although I missed the normal school experience, I have found new approaches to being a student outside of the classroom. Along with redefining what it means to be a student, we also have had to reevaluate how we are activists, allies, and members of our communities within the context of the current civil unrest and overdue awakening around the world. I was able to join a Black Lives Matter protest but have also learned to be active in other ways, like spreading information online and educating myself. While the future is still uncertain, COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement, and political polarity has signified an unsettled yet dynamic and positive path forward. The fireworks that now occur every night are a constant reminder of a change in normalcy and the idea that our society will not go back to the way it was.

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