

THE UNEXPECTED WAR

Jim E. Pares

Central High School, Class of 2021

We started 2020 like we do every other year, screaming “HAPPY NEW YEAR!” We made our resolutions and promised ourselves we would finally accomplish them. Many of us were ready to get to the gym and lose those 10 pounds we have been fighting to lose and many others were ready for a new job or a new education. But 2020 had other plans for us all. I think I can speak for many of us when I say this pandemic hit us all by surprise. I believe that this is something no one could have imagined. These are things that we read in stories, or see in movies and in shows, and we think to ourselves that these things are fiction and will never happen. But I feel like this pandemic serves as an example of really how weak we truly are. No matter how much technology and scientific or medical advances we have, it only takes a microscopic enemy to put a stop to the entire world.

This pandemic has been very hard for so many of us. Not only have so many people lost their jobs, but we, the students, have lost our education. For some of us, school is not just about education – it is the only safe haven that many students need. Many students rely on school to get a meal and schools are the only safe place for them from abusive parents or guardians. Therefore, being out of school is more complex than just not having an “education.” I’m not saying our education is not important, but it’s just not the most important consequence of this situation.

For the sake of this blog let’s discuss my personal experience with this whole pandemic. Before all this really started, I had recently transferred to an online school because my mom was very sick, and was expecting a few surgeries in the coming months. When the switch from in person to online school happened due to the shut down, I wasn’t really affected. I say this because I was already in a virtual school which was very organized and had everything that I needed to get done available.

Sadly, it was not the same story for my siblings. My sister is a student with an IEP or individual education plan for her autism, and due to her autism, this shift was very hard for her. She is a student that needs a structured routine every day for her to function to her ultimate potential and sadly this drastic change really hindered her. She did not like it at all and felt as though she wasn’t learning. I recall her saying many times how much she missed going to school and how she considered the online school a waste of time so I had to constantly push her to continue her studies and had to help her stay focused which was hard in a household setting.

I also observed how unorganized everything was which I also feel really affected the education that students were getting at home. First, there was a learning curve for teachers to learn how to use all the apps needed to teach the students. Second, it was a change for students and many just couldn’t manage which impacted their grades, bringing me to how online learning affected my brother, who is a very smart young boy like his older brother (me). With the shift to online school my brother completely changed as a student. He lacked the discipline to sit down and complete his work in a timely manner and instead wanted to play on his PlayStation all day. His grades went down because of this and, to be honest, he learned nothing during the months spent in online school. I strongly believe this was due to the lack of structure and organization present in this online environment because everything happened so fast that there was no time to plan. This whole situation was very stressful for me as not only a student, but as a son and as a brother.

I had transferred to a virtual school because my mother was sick, so I was the only one caring for her since my father works. I also had to balance my schoolwork as I cared for her. Then this pandemic started and I had to watch over my siblings. I had to make sure they had their work done and make sure they were doing all the things they needed to do. Sometimes I wasn’t able to complete my work, which left me very backed up during the final weeks of school. I had to balance many roles when this pandemic started, which was not easy. Not to mention, I also have my grandma living at home with us and she has many health conditions that make her very high risk. Additionally, my father is an essential worker which only added to the chaos in my house. I had a lot to juggle, but by the grace of god I made it through and everyone in my family has been safe.

Even though my family and I have been fine, I still have fears and insecurities about my future. Because of the pandemic I haven’t been able to take the SAT, which worries me because I am applying for college in the following months. Also, I have uncertainties about how everything will play out for me in terms of my education in the following years, especially if we don’t get a vaccine soon. This is a time with much uncertainty for me and the pandemic is making an already stressful time in my life more STRESSFUL. Sometimes I worry a lot about my future and how my education will continue. I also worry if I will be able to get a job after I graduate because we don’t know how long this pandemic will last, and if it ends, what if we get another one? I

also know how this pandemic has affected the economy and many work fields, so how long will it take for the economy and work fields to recover, and will it affect me? These are some of the many insecurities and uncertainties that I and many others have.

I think what many people in the future need to know is that humans are not immortal, our systems are as fragile as the insects that we kill on a daily basis. We also need to be prepared for things like this in the future. We need more structure and organization with our education in cases this happens again. We need to actively work towards preventing breakouts like this and be prepared if we do have other pandemics. At the end of the day, I put all my trust in god and trust in the plan he has for my life and this world. I just need to put my worries in his hands and play my role in helping curve this outbreak. And PLEASE IF YOU ARE READING THIS, WEAR YOUR MASK, and even if you don't believe in a god. God Bless You.

[Report accessibility issues and request help](#)

Copyright 2025 The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education's Online Urban Education Journal

Source URL:<https://urbanedjournal.gse.upenn.edu/archive/volume-18-issue-1-fall-2020/unexpected-war>