

## **Hillary Plunkett - 10th Grade**

*Springfield Township High School; Erdenheim, PA*

After a year of virtual, coming back to in-person school was definitely a significant shift for many people. Not everyone was mentally or physically prepared for the many changes that happened in these past two years. I am one of those people. I was not ready for the big shift from virtual to in-person. I had become more reserved throughout the quarantine, and I kept to myself. I isolated in my room, talking to maybe one person every other week. I spent all my time alone—not even talking to my parents most of the time.

When it was time for back to school, it was overwhelming. I was not ready to speak with so many people I hadn't seen for years or even never seen at all. I was too scared to ask simple questions. I was in my art class, and I really had to go to the bathroom. All I have to do is ask a simple question, right? I just have to say, "Can I go to the bathroom?" But I don't know where the bathroom is after weeks of being here. Now, I can't ask where the bathroom is because they'll see that I'm still lost in the school we've been going to for weeks. I sit there violently tapping my leg, making my desk shake. I am trying to sloppily complete my assigned sketches while waiting for it to be lunch. There, I can then quickly stuff down my food and hurry on to D block. Then, I will finally know where the bathroom is.

A year later, I familiarized myself with the school. I have learned how to navigate these messy halls, and I know most of the faces that I once knew as strangers around this building. I am no longer as scared to ask small questions and talk to other people. This experience has shaped me as I have learned to be much more aware of my surroundings as I walk down the halls, noting where everything is on my way. I am more comfortable in the building, and I can talk freely to those when needed. Though I am still nervous and shy when talking to authority, I can always ask necessary questions. I have learned through this transition that I still need to ask questions even if I am scared to ask them because, in the long run, it will benefit me more just to ask. I have also learned to be quiet, stay seated, and get through the day to get home without any problems.

This experience has shaped me to be more outgoing and has taught me to be much more confident. This has made my fears lessen, and I will no longer sit and suffer because I am too scared to ask a question. I am still shy, but I will not be silent anymore. Now, speaking to others does not overwhelm me as much as it did in the past. I can get through my days with no problems, and that's all I need to get by.