

Sam Pugh - 10th Grade

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March 13, 2020: Anyone remember that day? What were you doing the moment you remember hearing the words, "*We are just going to shut down for two weeks to flatten the curve?*" It seems to me that that was a pretty big curve. At the time, I was an eighth-grader thinking about high school and trying to decide where I belonged. Suddenly, my living room became my classroom, and my mom became the lunch lady.

Fast forward to September, when we were promised that although we would be virtual, teachers would do their best to keep it normal. Day after day, I would sit in my room, pretending to pay attention, but we all knew that there was nothing normal about the whole situation. It seemed like Christmas Day when the school announced that we would get to step back inside the building right after Spring Break.

With so many new rules and procedures, the day had come. It just didn't feel real. I got up at five fifteen am and made some scrambled eggs for breakfast. Getting ready for school was usually something that I dreaded and wasn't too excited about. When I was getting ready that morning, I was excited to make my lunch and pack it into the old black lunch box I hadn't touched in over a year. I had an overwhelming excitement while making food for the lunchroom that I had not eaten in since March 12th, 2020.

There was also what felt like a knot in my stomach, a feeling of being anxious, and about making sure I prepared completely for my first day. I packed myself the usual, a turkey and cheese sandwich for lunch, from waking up at the right time to taking my first few steps out the door. Then I jumped into the shower to wake myself up a little more. I brushed my teeth and then put on the outfit I had laid out the night before. It was almost as though I was dressing for the job I had always wanted! I had waited so long to see my friends, open my locker, and be in a new school where I could reinvent myself. I was out the door for my first real day of high school, but I wasn't sure what to expect.

Although the school's physical space was not new to me, as someone who had been a part of the swim team for so long, being a student was quite different. On that first day, I climbed out of the pool from what I thought was just a routine water polo practice, but as I got dressed, I began to see all of the students with their masks and keychain-sized hand sanitizers. Something just seemed off.

As I walked out of the locker room with my water polo team, I heard an echo coming down the hallway, "PUGH!" I turned around to see a friend from little league soccer walking toward me. It was nice because I didn't know many people at the school. It was strange, though, to only be able

to see his eyes, but I quickly realized that this was going to be the new normal. Normal or not, I was willing to take it. I would trade anything for being back at my dining room table, day after day, staring at a pixelated Chromebook version of my teachers and friends. If this is what school needed to be for right now, so be it, and I was just happy to be there.