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The Unforeseen Learning Experience

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought struggles unforeseen by anyone. This pandemic has tested each and every individual, forcing all to adapt. While it has undoubtedly been hard, there have been many lessons learned from this experience. As a student, I learned a number of things related to my life as a student and my life outside of the classroom. I learned how to navigate the internet and virtual meetings, how to write professional emails, how to plan ahead and designate my time, how to stay focused and hold myself accountable, but the number one thing that I have learned is not about myself. I learned that every person has different needs that you must learn to accommodate in order to effectively lead any sort of organization. This lesson is not only crucial for me personally, but also for school districts as they prepare for the possibility of another rapid closing. In order to prepare for this possibility, I believe that school districts should train all teachers to be proficient on any academic websites that could be used, plan a district-wide academy for every teacher to use and follow, and most importantly of all, reach out to student leaders for feedback on their struggles and be constantly ready to adapt their plan accordingly.

The biggest positive that can be taken from this pandemic is all of the lessons we have learned along the way. The lesson of utmost importance as a leader is one that not only affects yourself but one that affects others as well. Prior to this pandemic, I have held a multitude of leadership positions, but it was the leadership positions held during this pandemic that has taught

me the most about being a leader. Being Senior Class Vice-President and Missouri DECA State President during this time has undoubtedly been challenging, but it has presented many irreplaceable learning opportunities. In the past, I have been aware that each individual needs different resources in order to succeed, but this has come to the forefront in the past 9 months. Leading a DECA state officer team with student leaders throughout the state has opened my eyes to the fact that you never know what is going on in someone's life and everyone has different needs that you must be able to accommodate in order to accomplish what you have set out to do. My job as a leader is to serve others, and I have learned that in order to best serve these people, you must treat each individual as their own in order to maximize the potential of that team.

This realization is quite possibly more important for school districts than anyone else. In order to prepare for the possibility of another closing, schools must prepare in a multitude of ways. While most teachers by now are fairly good in the virtual environment, it is very important that we do not overlook the importance of achieving proficiency in these online programs. Having a training program for teachers will take the stress off of the teachers themselves, allow them to use more programs with better success, and in turn allow a better and more efficient learning environment for students. In addition to this, I believe there must be a district-wide virtual academy that will essentially provide an outline for teachers to follow. Not only will this make it easier for the teachers in this virtual environment, but this will provide the structure that students need. Having all of your teachers with different expectations becomes very stressful for students and leads to a hindered learning experience. Lastly, school districts should adopt a more flexible policymaking process in order to take student feedback and implement it in order to cater to the different needs of each individual student, allowing them the greatest opportunity for success.

In conclusion, this pandemic has brought struggles that were unforeseen by all, but through hard work and persistence, we have made it to where we are now and learned more than we thought possible in this short amount of time. This will be paramount to not only my success moving forward as a leader, but also the success of our school district as a whole.