Learning from COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, without a doubt, has changed the dynamics of schools and the course of education worldwide. Schools have had to adjust, adapt, and make education look completely different than it ever has before. While the unchartered waters of the pandemic have created multiple challenges for schools and students alike, the pandemic has taught us an even greater number of valuable lessons.

From my own perspective as a student, the pandemic has been a truly educational experience. First, the pandemic has taught me lessons in self-motivation. When our school initially closed its doors in March, we as students weren't required to do any schoolwork for a grade as the shut-down was so sudden and unexpected and not all students had access to internet at home. However, I had an Advanced Placement Literature Exam that I still had to take in May, as well as a College Algebra class to complete. Up to that point, I had been used to constantly having students around me working on their schoolwork, silently motivating me to get mine done. Once the stay at home orders were put into place, however, I no longer had accountability partners surrounding me throughout the day. I learned that in order to get my schoolwork done, I had to be my own motivator. I had to set goals, set a schedule, and choose to have a productive mindset, something that doesn't come naturally to me. The pandemic truly taught me that self-motivation is a crucial part in reaching ones' goals.

Furthermore, the pandemic reminded me how important education is for us as people. It taught me that humans have a basic need and desire to learn. Even after I had been removed from the school setting, I surprisingly still craved to learn, but in different ways. I devoted more time to doing things like reading, watching documentaries, and listening to podcasts. Doing these things rekindled my enjoyment of learning again, and reminded me of the importance of education.

Finally, the pandemic has taught me how valuable human interaction is, especially the interaction that school provides. School creates an environment for us to rely on one another, lean on one another, and make so many meaningful friendships. Going from seeing my classmates on a daily basis to not seeing them at all was difficult. I didn't realize how important my classmates were to me until I couldn't see them any longer. Since the pandemic has happened, I have a whole new appreciation for my classmates and the social interaction I am given at school.

Because of the sudden, unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, no school could have been fully prepared for it. But, now that we've experienced school doors closing and know that it could happen again, we can take the things we've learned and prepare for the future. To properly prepare for the potential of switching back to remote education, school districts should put a few systems in place. First, I think school districts should ensure that each student has access to internet at home. A personal hotspot should be provided to any student who doesn't

have internet access so that each student has the resources they need for a remote education. Next, I think every teacher should receive training on teaching virtually. For most teachers, teaching online is a completely new realm. School districts need to ensure that each teacher feels qualified and capable of teaching online so that students are receiving the best education possible. In addition, I think school districts need to check in on teachers regularly to ensure that they are prepared to go virtual at any given time. Teachers should have a virtual plan for each lesson they teach throughout the year. Finally, students should be clearly educated about what would be expected of them if their school went remote. Students need to be informed of the schools' expectations so they can obtain optimal success, even if they are learning remotely. If school districts prepare properly, remote education doesn't have to be detrimental to students' success.