

THE AVONNEWS

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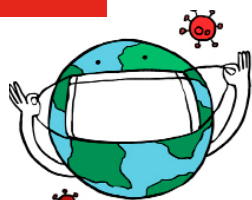


INSIDE THE ISSUE



AHS Advances With New Build Plans as 2021-22 Year Brings Most 'Lopes Ever

Junior Matthew Purcell explores the changes coming to AHS in the coming years as a result of the quickly-growing pace of Avonworth School District.



Mask Debate

No more wiping down desks and social distancing is a little more lax. The debate now moves to whether or not mask mandates should stick around too.



Homecoming Returns

After the unexpected loss of Homecoming during the 2020-2021 school year, it made a never seen before comeback right behind the middle-school gym doors.



AHS Adjusts to Coming Back Post-COVID

Students from each grade give their insight as to how they believe this first ever *post-pandemic* year is going to look.

Fall 2021

THE AVONEWS

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Volume 80 Issue 1

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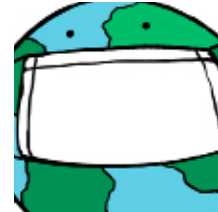
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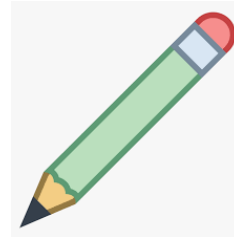
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Staff Photographers

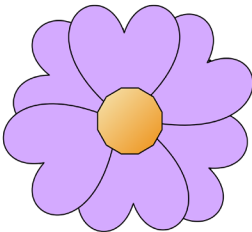
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AHS Moves Forward With New Building Plans

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AVONVIEWS

Photos and interviews by Journalism 1

How would you feel about the school potentially mandating COVID vaccinations in the near future?



"Relieved, because I feel that being vaccinated is very important and that it will prevent a lot of COVID [cases]. Sometimes I feel unsafe at school because many kids don't wear masks and those kids' families tend to not be vaccinated which makes it easy for it to spread."

Elena Zimmerman '25

"I would feel way safer I think because if everyone gets vaccinated there is way less of a risk that we would get COVID-19 and have to get into quarantine again."

Dallas Brown '25



"It's unconstitutional -- they can't force people to get the vaccine whenever they don't want it."

Olivia Penfield '22



"I think that in some ways I agree, and in some ways, I don't. In some ways people should be able to do what they want, but, at the same time, it does save lives. Personally, I am vaccinated and I feel a lot safer when I'm at school versus people who aren't vaccinated, and I feel like for the school's safety it sounds like a good idea. But then again, people do have an opinion and they should be able to do what they want."

Silas Newhouse '24



"That's absolutely ridiculous and against our constitutional rights; they can't be doing that stuff."

Josie Cervone '24



"I think it's a good thing because we need to get back to reality. To be honest I think people are way too scared of it and/or against it, which baffles me. I had 0 reactions to both vaccines, which might not mean everyone will have 0 reactions but it definitely won't kill you. The CDC has done countless tests and proven that the vaccine is 93% effective. To be simple, I want COVID to end and it will be years before it ends if vaccine mandates aren't in place."

Dylan Teale '23



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Revisiting the MET Gala

Joe Reed & Kate Berardi 21' Staff Writers

The MET Gala is an event where celebrities and designers meet for a red carpet event and dinner to fundraise for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. Each year is assigned a different theme that designers spend countless hours thinking about, trying to create the perfect piece that both conforms to the theme but also stands out and makes a strong statement. This is what gives the Met its significance. This year's event was held on September 13, as delays due to COVID restrictions pushed it back from its usual first Monday of May. The theme, decided by Vogue's Editor-In-Chief Anna Wintour, was "In America: A Lexicon of Fashion". Andrew Bolton, the curator in charge of Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, had hoped this theme would explore developing fashion in America. The designers worked hard to encapsulate American Identity in their pieces along with current social and political movements. Attendance at the Met Gala depends on who designers choose to put in their creations and sponsor their (\$35,000!) ticket. Naturally, the Met Gala has become a hub of creativity, where artists and celebrities alike strive for originality and memorability through their created looks. However, each of the individual takes on the theme double as invitations for criticism and opinion, which sparks both online and real-life conversations. Specifically, at this year's Met Gala, there were many conversations of how each look followed the theme, and how well each idea was executed.

Model Quannah Chasinghorse attended her first Met Gala this year. Chasinghorse told Vogue, "It was amazing to be able to be there and represent Indigenous people." Designed by Peter Dundas, her look aimed to visually appreciate her indigenous heritage and her perspective on American society. This is a good representation of how some celebrities aim to represent something personal to them -- they connect with the theme and work to display that idea.

Singer Billie Eilish wore designer Oscar de la Renta's dress. Eilish approached the theme of America by going with an Old Hollywood look. Her look embodied Marilyn Monroe, an American Icon. Like many others of the night, Eilish chose to represent a specific figure that would be recognizable as an American symbol.

Musician Grimes brought a futuristic view of America. Known for her eccentric and science-fiction style, Grimes put her own twist on the theme. Designed by Iris van Herpen and inspired by the book "Dune", Grimes' outfit stood out on the carpet. This look is a



great example of the many different spin-offs that are possible with each theme. Instead of choosing to travel back in time, Herpen and Grimes decided to embody the future.

AOC Controversial Dress:

"Tax the Rich": This was the statement on the back of representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's dress. The dress was by Brother Vellies, causing a controversy in the press and on social media. The Congresswoman hoped to highlight her progressive values to match the theme; however, many criticized her stance or thought she came off as out of touch. Ocasio-Cortez attending this event wearing a dress that said "Tax the Rich" with wealthy people and fashion elites was either seen as her making a bold and aggressive statement, delegitimizing progressive movements, or as her being completely tone deaf and politically irrational. So was the dress a slap in the face to the ultra-rich or a huge fumble by AOC?



Homecoming Makes A Comeback

Gbemi Odebode '25, *Staff Writer*

The first-ever AHS float committee brought collaboration, competition, and new experiences for class officers and sponsors alike. All eyes were on the seniors to put on a show. "To be completely honest, the only thing that would make this process easier is having experienced it before," said senior class President Margaret "Maggie" Goetz, when asked about her experience on the float committee. "Overall, everything has been coming along super well, with the teachers and students being more than willing to help out!"

AHS has never created a float committee to display floats for homecoming. The idea was put together and organized by the class sponsors and a few students. "It was Anna Kohler's brilliant idea. She pitched it to Mrs. Sebolt and me," said Ms. George, the senior class sponsor. The floats were part of numerous class competitions, all of which had the ultimate goal of generating excitement for homecoming and increasing school pride. This included the color wars from spirit week. Whichever class's float gets the loudest cheers from the fan section at the homecoming game, would win.

The junior class' theme is the Hollywood sign itself, a unique spin on the overarching homecoming theme of Hollywood. "All of the juniors who showed up were really excited to start working on it and contributed some great ideas that we've sort of merged into one great idea for the float," said junior class President Matthew Purcell. "I think we're all really excited to see how it's going to turn out!" However, being on the float committee hasn't been a walk in the park for everyone. "It's been okay... [but] we have had a few hiccups," said sophomore class Treasurer Ryan Frank. "...the stress of school plus the stress of homecoming has made it hard." **The sophomore float theme of neon will be sure to turn heads, but will it be enough to win the competition?**

The goal of any competition is to outshine the rest, and the pressure was really on the freshman class to show up and show off. "This year is our chance to show what we're capable of, and introduce ourselves to upperclassmen that we will be working with over the next 4 years... we're here to impress," said freshman class officer Airah Shafiq. Even more than that, the float committee, to the freshman, is about building school pride and showcasing all the hard work that went into their float. "All we hope is that we can give the crowd, and all our fellow classmates, something to remember in their time here at Avonworth."

The freshman float ended up winning the competition, receiving the loudest cheers from the fan section at the homecoming football game. The overwhelming consensus from all the class officers, regardless of grade level or difficulty, seems to be pride. "I've grown the most in my appreciation for Avonworth and the students that I get to go to school with every day... we really are one big family, and that is not something that every school can say," said senior class Vice President Anna Kohler. Above all else, the float committee taught class officers about adaptability and perseverance.

"Even with COVID restrictions changing things in life, there's always room to create new traditions," said junior class President Matthew Purcell. "[Traditions] that can be just as good -- if not better -- than the old ones." There seems to be only one complaint from the class officers, and it comes down to the work to reward ratio of the floats. "I wish the floats would have been showcased a little longer, like ten minutes of fame, then they got taken apart," said sophomore class officer Cassandra Heinauer. "I feel like 7 or 8 hours of work was a lot for like 10 minutes of the show." Regardless of the dissatisfaction some of the class officers may have felt about the process of their work being displayed, though, many of them still feel like they were able to pull a net-positive from this experience. "I feel as though I have grown to be more open-minded to other's ideas," said student council Secretary Brandon Smidl. "Think of crazy ideas, because those ideas are the ones that are the best."

Congratulations to the freshman class officers on their win and to all of the class officers for their hard work!

Below: Homecoming Court 2021, including Homecoming Queen Amonti Thomas pictured 3rd from right in front





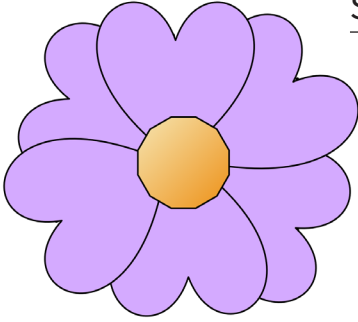
'Lopes Football Photo Collage

Hannah Palmer '22 *Photographer* Macey Schriefer '22 *Photographer*



Fragments Feature

Sage Hardiman '22 *Fragments* Member



Flowers

I went to buy some flowers
So I could give them to my friends after hours.

Carnations for two dollars,
Gifts for my kind, fellow scholars.

I don't need this favor returned,
So don't be concerned.
This is the least I can do
That is, giving this little gift to you.
Just be my friend,
And we'll all be happy in the end.

I wrote this poem during homecoming week in my 10th-grade Creative Writing class. The poem was about my plan to buy some of the carnations being sold in the library and give them to my friends. What it doesn't mention is that they were completely out of carnations when I went to buy them on Friday. I did, however, buy flowers that December and give those to my friends.

For more poems, short stories, personal essays, and literary musings, visit Fragments new website @ fragmentsmagazine.net

AHS Moves Forward with New Build Plans

Matthew Purcell '23, Content Editor

As October advances and students begin to settle in for the new school year, recent construction projects at the high school campus are doing the same. With 535 students in grades 9-12 at the high school this year, and the number of students in the district continuing to increase, AHS is beginning to feel the confines of a building that was last expanded -- excluding the recent addition of the LGI -- 21 years ago. Because of this, a new construction project meant to increase the amount of space available to students and faculty was proposed last year and will see itself completed throughout and beyond this school year. While large as a whole (latest estimates put the project around \$20 million), the project essentially consists of three main, simpler parts: the addition of a new parking lot, the renovation of the High School Entrance, and an expansion of the middle school.

The recent completion of the first of the phases, a new parking lot in what was once an open field next to the building, created roughly 180 new spots for students and faculty alike. Construction began in June 2021 and was scheduled to finish over the summer, but extended into fall due to shipping delays with plastic piping required for drainage underneath the lot. Fortunately, however, paving was finished just in time -- the day before -- for the Homecoming football game. Community members can now park closer to Lenzner field. The shuttle buses that once took fans back and forth along Josephs Lane are gone. With the current sophomore class of 156 students, (41 more than the current juniors), the new lot will ease some of the parking congestion on campus, especially as the sophomores begin to get their drivers' licenses.

The school board was also presented with seven different options for structuring traffic flow around the building and two different options for renovating the high school entrance. Design option D, shown below, was chosen for the approximate circulation plan, but no design has been chosen for the look of the high school entrance yet. Each of the seven options for traffic flow varies slightly with how many total parking spots will be offered around the entire building, mainly due to variations in where buses will go to drop off/pick up students and where parents will go to drop off/pick up students. And even though option D was selected for the rough outline, many of the individual factors can be changed as construction progresses. The newly completed parking lot, however, was one factor that remained unchanged across all options. Additionally, there will be two turning lanes when drivers are exiting the school and turning onto Josephs Lane. The renditions to the left show how traffic flow could work as well as where buses go and how pedestrians will navigate themselves. This option also offers 264 parking spaces available for everyday use, which is a profound increase from the current number... even including the Lenzner Lot.

Last, but certainly not least, is the proposed expansion of the middle school 'wing', illustrated in orange in the design. Like the high school entrance renovation, there were also two options offered for the addition's exterior, but there (similarly) hasn't been a decision made yet. Across both options, though, the interior specifications remain the same... and they're jaw-dropping, to say the least.



OPTION 1

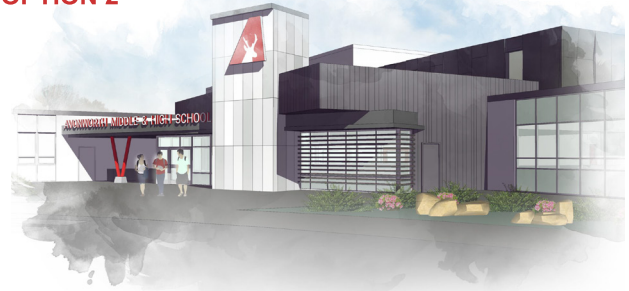


The architects first gathered input from students, parents, teachers, and community members around the district to create the first designs for the project, and it has been taken into consideration for all of the changes since. For one, the library will split into a smaller middle school library within the new addition, as well as a bigger high school library above the current middle school cafeteria. New classrooms will replace the current library. There is a possibility for a connection between the high school library and the high school gym that will depend on how the noise level impacts students' ability to quietly study in the new library. John Brandt, a member of the Avonworth School Board, said the new library will also be a very different space than what students are used to because of the changing needs of libraries in today's world. He also talked about the restrictions of the building, stating that when the high school was first built, the district could've never imagined this need for expansion -- especially vertical expansion -- explaining why only certain parts of the building can withstand a second floor addition.

In terms of the exterior renovation of the high school entrance and the expansion of the middle school, the options are just as great, as pictured here. In addition to the renditions, Brandt said the district will release an animated walk-through showing all proposed changes in line with the current plans, and continued to emphasize the fluidity of all of the project's plans.

Unfortunately, however, the current juniors and seniors won't be around to see it. The current schedule says that Design Development will continue from now until the end of December, at which point drafting of the construction documents will take place from January

OPTION 2



to April 2022, before the job is offered for bidding from May to mid-June. Brandt said construction is expected to begin in June of 2022 and it is hoped that it will be completed over the summer of 2023 -- but that's only if everything goes as planned.

Even though half of the current student body won't be here to see it, it's refreshing to know that the school is working on creating an environment for students that's even better than the one we have now. It's also interesting to see how Avonworth is beginning to grow as a district, and what changes that's bringing with it. This new project will add something to our smaller district that rivals some of the biggest and best schools in Western Pennsylvania, and will introduce access to new resources that will make our schools even more sought-after. Furthermore, Brandt added that these changes will reflect what community members most want to see in our district-- a better representation of our school's identity. He said that most of what the architects heard was people saying they really want it to distinctly look like the Avonworth High School that they have known.

On Monday, November 15, at 6:45pm, the school board plans to hold a meeting to update the school board and community on the construction plans. All community members are welcome to attend but must register beforehand using a link that will be posted on the Avonworth School District Website. Until then, the most recent proposals are available in slideshows posted on the District website under the "Construction Updates" tab.

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AVONEWSONLINE.ORG



'POST' PANDEMIC LIFE: Experiences of Each Grade

Emma Noss '25, Matthew Purcell '23,
Zoe Trexel '23, Emily Davis '22

A Full Freshman Year: Is It Possible? -- Emma Noss

Although the last two years at Avonworth High School have been out of the ordinary, the class of 2025 may have a chance at a full freshman year. In March of 2020, Avonworth High School shut down due to the then-emerging COVID-19 pandemic; derailing students' freshman years (and lives overall). The administration has worked tirelessly to return to and keep the school open, but both students and parents are wondering now whether or not this year will be different. "Although it is always possible, it is improbable that we would need to shift to completely virtual learning this year due to COVID," writes Superintendent Dr. Jeff Hadley. "The current guidance is to continue mitigation measures... limit the spread, and do everything we can to keep students in school."

But how does this relate to the class of 2025? Despite the ongoing pandemic, the freshmen have been playing fall sports, joining clubs, and studying hard. "Being in clubs and sports really opens the gate to the entire high school experience. It gets you involved with your community and involved with the students at your high school," said freshman junior-varsity volleyball player Mia Milojevic. "If you are staying organized and on track, managing sports and school hasn't been terrible, but it still can be overwhelming with late games and schoolwork."

There is still a mask mandate at AHS, but a plethora of school activities are ongoing. "There are dances, and football games and other things," said freshman Sadie Walsh. Walsh was completely virtual throughout her 8th-grade year and is very excited to be back. "While we are still distanced and masking, we are back in person which is very nice." But happiness is not the only emotion that in-person school brings, "There is an increased amount of pressure. In 9th grade, we are technically in high school, so it feels like every single thing we do is pointed towards college."

Other students feel the pressure as well. "Your grades now affect your career... everything is very high stakes," remarked freshman class officer and student council co-treasurer Airah Shafiq. In high school, students are no longer in groups with the same people all of the time. This puts a lot of pressure on freshmen to compete to understand concepts at the same level as upperclassmen. Inevitably, this was shocking to students who are used to grade-restricted classes and seeing the same people all day. This event can best be put into words by freshman Ari McCarson: "There are more classes, and some of them are electives, or academic or honors classes, so it's likely that you have an entirely different set of classes than other people in the grade."

However, it is a hallmark of high school. “We have full schedules...and we have a bell to signal classes...that pretty much defines high school for me,” said junior varsity soccer player Elena Zimmerman.

“I think that it has so far been what I thought it would be,” remarked freshman Ava Monkalis. “There are so many TV shows and movies filled with unrealistic expectations and stereotypes... I didn't really have an expectation.” This is a sentiment shared by other freshmen as well. “I did not really have any expectations coming into the year, so it hasn't lived up to or let me down on anything,” said Henry Amick.

Perhaps it is the lack of expectations and uncertainty that will be the defining characteristics of the class of 2025's freshman year. Freshman Veronica Garcia reflected: “The coronavirus pandemic has proved to be anything but normal by forcing the world to adapt and re-invent itself. So, will “normal” be going back to the ways of our past, or is our current state the new normal?”

A look Ahead for Sophomores: What Will the Year Look Like? -- Matthew Purcell

The sophomore class ended middle school virtually, completed a mostly-virtual freshman year, and is now beginning what could effectively be considered their first year in the high school. The class of 2024 persevered through some extreme difficulties and changes. This year they're learning to balance their harder classes that assign more homework with greater time commitments to after-school activities, as well as learning how to navigate high school life in general. Some sophomores were able to provide interesting insight into how their year has been so far, what they're happy to do again now that we're back in-person full time, what they miss about virtual schooling, and what they're looking forward to this year.

Sophomore Christian Cooper described his year up until this point, saying, “It's been pretty good... I haven't had any big hiccups or anything with grades or any assignments in particular, cause I've done that in the past couple years... particularly in the beginning of the year.” One in-person advantage for sophomores are the coveted “open-mods”, the first time ever this year. These blocks of time give students the opportunity to catch up on missed work or get a head start on their homework of the upcoming night, which is very convenient as their work begins to amp up in preparation for junior and senior year. “Work has been more than it was last year, but I guess that's expected,” remarked sophomore Haley Dexter. Just like they have in years past, though, the sophomores have been adjusting well to the new demands and are gaining valuable experience that will help them for the rest of their academic careers.

The two most common responses sophomores gave as to what they're most happy to do again now that school has resumed its traditional in-person learning style, is getting back to sports and seeing their friends. “It feels good to be able to see everybody,” said sophomore Ben Barnes. “I know athletic events... we're allowed to have fans in the

stands again, which is really nice.” Sophomore Jacob Hanny agreed, saying that he's most happy just “to be able to go and support the teams at sporting events.” Hanny also added, “I think it's nice to see all my friends again, and to hang out with other people and not have to worry about COVID as much as we did last year.”

Part of the reason these essential high school experiences could return were declining COVID-19 cases throughout the district, and the state, making a physical return to school possible. But as cases begin to rise again -- including at our school -- some opportunities students have grown accustomed to could once-again be in jeopardy. Fortunately, though, if a temporary return to virtual schooling were to happen after all, sophomores say it wouldn't be all bad. Mostly, they miss being at home and the more relaxed workload.

“Really, it feels kind of strange [to be back],” said Cooper, a 100% virtual student for all of last year. “I got used to it -- having to be more independent -- so it just feels kind of strange being a little bit more structured now.” Other students feel the same way. “I really just miss being able to sleep in, and I had a lot of free time at home when teachers gave us time to work on stuff off of the Google Meet,” offered Dexter. Hanny said he mostly missed “the part where it wasn't as strict... with grades and everything.” Barnes, however, said something most sophomores, and really all AHS students, can agree with: “I really just miss being at home... but, like I said, we're able to have football games and stuff so, I mean, I'll sacrifice being at home for being here and being able to play.”

In terms of the rest of this year, some sophomores look forward in a general sense for what the rest of their 10th-grade-year has ahead. “I don't know if I'm really looking forward to anything in particular this year,” said Cooper. “I'm just looking forward on a more broad scale to the opportunities that I'm getting from being here at school as opposed to online.” Sophomore Tyler Woodfill said that he's “looking forward to having actual breaks [in the day] instead of just being home all the time, because when we were virtual there was never really a break.” This was something that many students struggled with last year -- especially this class, who, as freshmen, were only just developing the initiative to get their work done on time and learning how to maintain a healthy schedule in their life. But everyone who came into school this past August showed that the sophomores are perfectly capable of adapting to change and overcoming the challenges presented to them.

Still, though, it can be nice to have a break sometimes, especially after a hard 9 weeks. Haley Dexter seemed to sum up the school-wide feeling the best, saying, “Um... I'm just looking forward to Thanksgiving Break!”

After Just Six Months of Regular School Over Two Years, Juniors Ready for Normal -- Zoe Trexel

The traditional American “high school experience” is one shared among many of the people in our lives. Growing up, we saw it in movies, we read about it in books, and we looked forward to when we would get to experience it ourselves. Before we even got here, we knew what to expect: high schoolers are supposed to get the experiences of school dances, football games, clubs, sports, and the ups and downs of a high school social life. Specifically at Avonworth, it also means finally getting to make purchases from the ‘Lopes Lounge, having agency via open mods, and beginning to tackle more challenging classes. Whether you view your time in high school as a nostalgic trip, or a cringe-inducing experience, one thing is true for everyone -- this time in a person’s life has a meaningful, lasting impact. Yet, as all of us have come to learn over the past two years, these “normalities” can change in an instant. Everything that we used to take for granted requires in-person, face-to-face experiences. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit nearly 2 years ago, many of these things have gone away. Avonworth’s current junior class has had barely 6 months -- across more than two full years in high school -- of unmasked and in-person high school life. Although things have begun to look up as teenagers can be vaccinated, and case numbers are generally on the decline for those with the vaccine, this virus has taken an unpredictable course, so it remains to be seen what our high school experience will truly be like.

In order to come to a conclusion, I discussed the past and future of our time at AHS with a few different members of the junior class. Kayla Turcsanyi reflected that her freshman year was “fun and eventful until COVID hit.” This sentiment was largely echoed by the majority of those who had been interviewed. We were still struggling to adjust to harder high school classes and learning how to manage our workloads when it was made even more difficult by the sudden interruption that was the transition to virtual learning in March 2020. By the time we entered sophomore year, we hadn’t gotten the same experience dealing with a high school course load that many others had before us. The majority of juniors I spoke to agreed that sophomore year was when things took a turn for the worst. With our irregular schedules and dealing with concerns about our family and friends, school was one of the last things on many of our minds. Anna Boothby, a 100% virtual student for most of last year, shared, “It feels like sophomore year didn’t even happen. I honestly don’t remember almost anything from last year.” As someone who was also virtual last year, it feels like I fast-forwarded from being a middle-schooler to entering my junior year of highschool. And if the time we lost last



year wasn’t confusing enough, it has been just as disorienting to navigate a changed school after a full year of being at home. Interestingly, the opinions about the future of our junior year were very consistent with one another. Payton Sciere said she hopes we will be able to have a “normal year”, but also admits that’s “very wishful thinking.” While many of us are tired of staring at schoolwork and blurry faces over a computer screen, this may yet be a reality for us to face again in the future. All of my interviewees shared a similar sense of optimistic realism -- everyone wished to be back to normal, as high school was before, but understood this may never happen for us.

But, what does this actually mean for us as a junior class? Many of those around us remember their high school years in detail, and that time was defined by their in-person interactions and events. All of the juniors I spoke with thought our unique experience would have a profound effect on our class. Anna Boothby notes that “everyone right now, not just our class, has had to learn from this some maturity.” Cameron Marshall, one of our junior class-officers, also shared that “in some ways, COVID has brought us together as a community in a way that I don’t think any other generation had.”

Overall, I think the junior class is still resilient in the face of this pandemic, hoping for a future to be a little brighter and our days at school a little more “normal”. We’ve come out of this pandemic with advantages and experiences no one else has had before us. As for if this year will be our first “normal” one, we can only wait, do our best to protect and help each other, and hope to see the best result.

Some Seniors Ready to Return, Others Ready to Move On -- Emily Davis '22

A majority of students typically hold a specific year of highschool close to their hearts, and will never truly forget it due to making core memories that will last a lifetime. Senior Year is meant to maximize fun in every single event while someone also gets their after-high school plans figured out. With the class of 2022 being hit with COVID-19 quarantine right in the peak of their high school years, the students had not pictured going back to a “normal” year. Fortunately, for the class of 2022, their senior year is as normal as it could be, especially compared to the past two years: Homecoming, WPIAL playoffs, fan sections, a live fall play. The only inconvenience to some students would be the mask policy, which states all students and staff need to wear a mask properly while inside the school building.

Since some of the old high school *norms* are returning, the majority of seniors are happy to have most of these traditions back in place. "I'm happy to have in-person school back..." said senior Killian Horigan. "I've missed some people that I forgot existed! Not seeing someone for a year and a half can do that to you!" Most seniors I interviewed shared Killian's happiness with getting in-person school friends back in their daily lives. Junior year was heavily virtual, split into Group A and Group B, Day 1 and Day 2, and even separate and all virtual classes for the 1st semester. Attending virtual classes every day, coordinating being in-person compared to virtual, and keeping track of due dates and schedules were three new stresses in a normally stressful junior year, where many students load up on AP or CHS classes. Senior Jacob Chestnut adds, "I'm happy to be back in school because it feels so much easier."

Coming back everyday also brings some of the norms every senior class experiences, some welcome these with open arms, while others just endure them. "I am looking forward to all of the senior milestones (like homecoming, senior picnic, prom, graduation, etc) that are approaching fast," said senior Leinala Cabrera, who was all virtual her junior year, "and making more bonds with people."

Many seniors in past years have felt like they wait a long time to get to the top of high school, and before they know it, its time for prom and graduation. At the same time, students like Olivia Penfield have the full return of another longstanding tradition - a rapidly building case of senioritis. "I am looking forward to graduating and getting a start on my life." said Olivia.

Some students have responded to all the changes the past two years with an even greater urgency to just finish high school and get to that next campus, a full time job, or even just a next location anywhere but Josephs Lane. Either way, each individual student seems to have at least one moment to look forward to by the end of the Senior Year.



What wasn't welcome but still around is the sense of stress particular to seniors. Within the first few weeks of senior year, the majority of the students changed their opinion or viewpoint about stress. Senior Leinala Cabrera stated, "I am most stressed about applying to colleges. Just making sure that we get our applications right the first time is a lot of pressure because it feels like we only get one chance at this." She feels that most of the stress from the Senior Year has nothing to really do with the high school itself, but rather has to do with the responsibilities she must face after this year.

On the contrary, Senior Jacob Chestnut mainly was thinking about high school rather than post-school plans. He stated, "I'm stressed to do school in-person again." Going from online all of Junior Year, at home, in a more relaxed setting, to fully in-person school everyday has been a new layer of stress for many seniors, though by October some sense of routine is starting to develop. No matter what each individual student stresses over -- regarding high school or after high school -- stress seems to be a predominant emotion every senior must face.

Overall though, no emotion is more prominent for the class this year than happiness. One 9 weeks is finished already, so the memories made from now until then will be ones that last students the rest of their lives. And even though it may not be exactly like a typical senior year the class of 2022 pictured as freshman, senior Olivia Penfield summed it up perfectly by saying, "I think it's as normal as it can be."



Politics: To Mask or Not to Mask?



Laurel Purcell '23, Associate Editor

The start of this year has seen hundreds of returning faces -- only, they're still covered by facemasks. The protective face coverings have become a familiar sight over the last year and a half of the COVID-19 pandemic. The PA Department of Health requires that all staff members, administration, students, and teachers wear a mask while indoors at a school. This means masks must be worn (over the nose!) in all classes and free periods except for lunch; even gym classes have to wear masks inside, complicating the classes for everyone involved. Most people are tired of masks -- and COVID in general -- by now. We've gone from the then-novel excitement of two weeks off back in 2020, to assurances that we would be in school again after a few months, to abrupt transitions from virtual to in-person and back to virtual, to vague, hand-wavy hopes that maybe next year will be better. No one seems to have any idea when everything will be "back to normal."

And how could we, at this point? Everyone's life has been fundamentally changed by the pandemic. Many people have lost loved ones to the virus. The number of cases is rising yet again. There are almost as many cases now as there were in the spring. Hospitals are receiving more and more patients sick from COVID. Although plenty of businesses are opening up again, many don't require any proof of vaccination to go without a mask. For those who are vaccinated and abide by the restrictions, it almost seems like endless pandemic, even though they are doing everything they can. Every time life inches closer to pre-pandemic routines, something goes wrong: more cases, the mutated, more-contagious Delta variant, or tightened restrictions. Even though restrictions exist to keep us safe, it's always disappointing to see the light at the end of the tunnel move a little further away.

Very few people expected this year to be so similar to last year. Many restrictions in school remain from last year, even though multiple vaccine variants have been available for months to those as young as 12. Now you have approved booster shots, as well as approval to mix vaccines. Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson are all recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Currently, the Pfizer vaccine is the only one of the three available to those under 18 (although it isn't mandatory to be vaccinated to attend school). Add the recent CDC approved vaccine for preteens and elementary school children as well.

Yet we keep striving for normalcy, including removing some adjustments to our school days. Unlike last year, no one has the option to attend classes completely vir-

tually. Even the students who lingered on the other side of the computer screen to finish out the last few weeks of last school year virtually are back to taking class in-person. True, we have to wear masks, but we aren't living in constant fear of a school-wide quarantine shutdown that forces us back to online classes. We even had a homecoming dance; the upperclassmen last year, which for some this would have been their last high school homecoming dance, weren't so lucky. Many experiences we quickly took for granted this year (like we did before in 2020 too) -- spectators at sports, football games with a full fan section, even having lockers -- we simply didn't get last year. Being able to see our friends faces -- yes, even if they are wearing a mask -- is more of a blessing than we realize.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE MASKS:

We wear masks for a reason: they work. Masks are so effective in preventing the spread of COVID and other diseases because they block the tiny, COVID-carrying respiratory droplets released by an infected person through their mouth. According to the CDC, masks are proven to be up to 80% effective in preventing respiratory droplets from being discharged into the air. Although it isn't perfect, this is extremely helpful for those who may have gotten COVID but are asymptomatic and aren't aware. Masks keep people around them safe. Masks can even keep you safe if someone near you has COVID and neither of you are aware by helping to prevent the infected droplets from getting near or into your mouth. And, of course, remember to abide by the other guidelines and recommendations put in place: get the vaccine, wash your hands, avoid touching your face, practice social distancing, and wear your mask indoors. Even if you're vaccinated, it's still possible to contact and transmit COVID, even with the lower risk.

For more student opinions, go to
[Avonewsonline.org](https://www.avonewsonline.org)

THE LAST WORD

Niomi Ellis '22, *Editor-in-Chief*

Last year, spending hours at a time sitting at my desk completing hours worth of assignments, and staring at a screen full of colorful letter icons, I couldn't help but crave for a change. I had extreme FOMO (fear of missing out), like my days were on repeat. I'm sure I'm not the only one who felt like this. Virtual life had hit the whole school with chaos in March 2020, and the months after definitely were not what I had expected them to be, especially since I stayed virtual every day until just two months ago. Yet, virtual school every day or hybrid school format, Group A or Group B, we made it through, and here we are with our first imperfectly normal start to a school year since August 2019.

So now we've finished the first nine weeks of a nearly *post-pandemic* year, which is also the last fall on this expanding campus for the graduating class of 2022. For seniors, what was this four-year experience like? Freshman year, August and September, and October 2018, besides figuring out where the classes are, what was typically running through our minds was a year full of new experiences with the big dogs. I remember the talk of the hallways for the whole first quarter as a freshman was homecoming, especially after we finished comparing who had a foods class or not.

Sophomore year, our mindsets started to change. Typically, at this point in our high school experience we realized, oh, we should probably take this seriously. Oddly enough, now two years later, even with the pandemic changing our schooling, most sophomore schedules back then seem way more packed with classes than our schedules right now as seniors. And before we knew it, we were having an 'extended' two weeks of spring break . . . or so we thought. We ended on our own, every day, going to school through Google Meet or reading posts on Classroom pages. If we started taking our year seriously right around December, in the last days of the 2010s, we may have been more prepared to end our sophomore year attempting to grasp the final units in Algebra II and STEM CHEM through google classroom posts. Yet, beyond our control, before we could even realize it was time to take it seriously, things changed, quickly and thoroughly. Then came August 2020 and the start of our junior year, like a smack in the face. I won't get into detail about the bore of virtual life, because as I wrote earlier, well there isn't much to say, or especially that I want to revisit and write anything about at all.

With this year entering like a breath of fresh air, there are most certainly experiences and accomplishments each grade can anticipate. Freshman life isn't much different from #TheBefore times, minus a visit to a



ropes course. High school is still brand new for you. Sophomores are currently in the building the most of any grade. No optional LEAD time, no early release. So you have time to adjust to your first real high school year.

Be wiser than us, take school seriously now in your classes, and try out as many extracurricular activities as you can fit into your life. Juniors, besides juggling a first year of AP and CHS Classes and the heavy workload, are expected to be looking forward to, well, succeeding throughout this next year.

For us, the graduating class of 2022, we're back into balancing the rush of tests and busywork, while trying to plan our whole future out. Something I already enjoy and will continue to appreciate: having the ability to leave at 12:13 every day, getting comfortable that we don't have to plan a virtual senior skip day, and knowing the end of the year will be graduation day.

No matter what grade you are in, even if you're stuck at home for a bit with COVID, we're still (mostly) all back at the school in person. If you feel like you missed out on something last year, or even so far this year, talk to a teacher, a best friend, or an upperclassman and make it happen. Let's not take this long-awaited post-pandemic school life for granted. For me, I am glad to be back and comfortable in the norms of high school.