



Great Vision Great Coverage

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Hybrid Learning Debate Comes to a Close

By Simone Tillman

The debacle over in-person education has presented a problem for Maryland schools ever since re-opening on August 31st, 2020. With Covid-19 cases on an alarming incline, Baltimore County decided that the school year would start completely virtual; providing the proper technology and lunches for those who would need it. However, as the months went by, it became clear that going back to school permanently would cause some conflict. Governor Hogan, along with the school board, initially set their sites on a hybrid schedule—of equal days virtual learning and in-person—to begin at the end of January in 2021. With an unpredictable virus, and alarmed parents and staff, this decision became quite the hot topic.

Once schools failed to re-open in January because of hesitation surrounding the danger of it, another survey was sent to the students' parents this February. The choice was simple: hybrid learning or all-virtual. While it can't be known what everyone picked, it's clear the results were almost neck and neck. The Franklin High School Gazette put out a poll for students about which choice they would've made, and the

results were shocking. A whopping 260 said they would continue their virtual learning, while hybrid got the higher score of just 262, a mere win by two students more. While both options are valid, it is no surprise that people are so split on the idea.

Parents and teachers have been voicing their concerns for months, practically the entirety of the school year. Some wish to wait until the teachers are all vaccinated, while some refuse to let their children go back to school at all, and others can't stand one more day at home. But what about the students' perspective in all this? Junior Oreoluwa Jaiyesimi shares his opinion on the new scheduling options. "Prior to the start of the second wave, the hybrid learning schedule was something that I was interested in, a chance to have a little taste of life back to normal and perhaps even see my friends again, but now there's worries about different strains of the virus and with how accustomed I am to virtual learning life, hybrid just isn't for me." He shares the same fate as many students throughout this pandemic. Earlier on, they would have leapt at the choice to return to school and interact with classmates, but as cases increase and variants get worse, they are starting to reevaluate that choice.



Testing in K-12 schools during the Covid-19 crisis.

<https://www.jhsph.edu/covid-19/articles/testing-in-k-12-schools.html>

Hybrid learning is not a complete loss though. Many students are more than excited to come back to the school buildings. "Virtual learning is not for everyone," junior Kalea Noble shared. And it's true, some people do need that in-person connection between a student and teacher. That's why, at the forefront of this hybrid plan, special education and younger children would come first. Face-to-face education is vital for them. But the middle schoolers and high schoolers are a different conversation. They do have the maturity to continue with virtual learning if they decide to. Hence, the decision all comes down to this: is it worth it?



Where Does Virtual Learning Go Wrong?
<https://tiptopbrain.com>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Franklin News	2
Education News	3
Student Interest	4

How Are We Handling the Distance?

By Kiersten Jones

Since the middle of March 2020, we've transitioned from our traditional in-person learning to distance learning due to the pandemic. Many people have mixed feelings about distance learning, including myself. Regardless of how much we like or dislike learning from home, it can be said that we've all seen noticeable differences between in-person and distance learning. Senior Cheryl Umaña and sophomore Laila Isella shared their perspectives on their distance learning experience and how well they've adjusted.

Q: Overall, how do you feel about distance education? Do you enjoy it?

Cheryl: I am neutral towards distance education. I enjoy having more time to myself but miss the in person aspect of school.

Laila: I enjoy the experience that I'm having during distance learning. It's not something I would want to do my entire school years. But I feel that it is the best move for the situation that we're in.

Q: How effective has distance learning been for you?

Cheryl: Distance learning has been pretty effective. I am able to set my own pace to learn more material.

Laila: Distance learning has been, I guess I can say, pretty effective. I feel that I am still getting to learn in the best way that I can.

Q: What could be improved? What should change?

Cheryl: I think that teachers should be encouraged to spread online material that can help better mental health. I also think that homeroom teachers should be encouraged to share some announcements that would be beneficial for everyone to know.

Laila: Honestly, I feel that we are given too much work in some classes. Some teachers feel that because we are online this year that school is easier and we can do more, but there are a lot of problems with technology and some teach-

ers don't understand that it is out of our control sometimes.

Q: Do you feel that you've been provided with the resources that are necessary in order to succeed in distance learning?

Cheryl: I feel that I have been provided with the necessary materials to succeed in distance learning.

Laila: I can say yeah. With what we have and trying new things with websites and Google, I think we are being creative in how we get our work done.

Q: How has distance learning affected your senior year?

Cheryl: Distance learning takes away a lot of experiences that seniors get, but it did make it easier to maintain good grades to report to colleges.

Q: How has distance learning affected your sophomore year?

Laila: I know that this isn't how I would have wanted to spend my sophomore year, but it definitely isn't the worst thing in the world. I feel that I am making the best of the year and just hope that my junior and senior year will be a bit better.



Like Cheryl and Laila, we've all had to adjust to our "new normal" distance learning. Virtual learning has changed so much since we first started it close to a year ago. Soon, many students will be going back to school, while many will be continuing their virtual learning journey. What do you think school will be like once this new plan starts? Do you prefer distance or in-person learning?

Where are you headed?

By Bari Weinstein

The class of 2022 does not have graduation in the near future anymore. Some have athletic scholarships, while others are waiting to see where they will be in the fall. I had the pleasure of talking to three amazing young women to find out where they are headed as they take a dive into the world of becoming an adult.

Junior Shenandoah Wolf shared her future plans. "My plans are to serve in the Navy and probably going to serve for the four years required and then go to college to get a degree in criminology. I plan to double major in some sort of criminology and theatre. I want to be an NCIS agent after I graduate, but I would also like to continue in theatre. In college, I hope to take some forensic science classes and some theatre and chorus classes."

Junior Lea Glaser plans to have a career in "Sports media and just the journalism field over all." The things she misses most about high school are "seeing and making memories with friends."

Junior Kennedy Lee's future plans focus on sports. "I chose to play lacrosse in college because I have a passion for the game, and it's been a dream of mine ever since I can remember. I do not plan on playing professional lacrosse."

There are steps we take to enter. First it's college, right? The process of taking loads of tests. Then, we go into eventually seeking a job, and the steps continue. From student athletes to going to the Navy or being an FBI agent, we all take different paths in life. Some small, others large, in the sense, that's how we want to be seen or heard. It's cool to talk and understand why people have a hunger for sports, or news or politics. Only because it's like indulging in "a whole new world," to quote the musical *Aladdin*. It's exciting and nerve-racking at the same time, to go into the so called 'real world.' We see how people can do amazing things, like create million-dollar companies or play Christina Yang in "Greys Anatomy." It is fulfilling to see something out. Good luck to everyone in life. You will and can do whatever dreams you hope to fulfill.

Students Respond to Anti-Voting Rights Legislation

By Logan Dubel



Delegate Reid Novotny recently put forth legislation to limit student representative's voting rights, sparking outrage from many groups.

Earlier in February, a coalition of students formed to oppose new legislation that aims to prevent student members on county boards of education from casting deciding votes. On February 12th, the legislation received an unfavorable report from the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee. Although the proposed bill will not ultimately get signed into law, students remain alarmed by the latest attempt to limit their power.

Officially called House Bill 629, the one-page legislation introduced by newly appointed Delegate Reid Novotny (District 9A), would have prevented students from acting as the deciding vote on issues addressed by the board.

If passed, Novotny's legislation would have essentially deemed student votes null and void on issues split straight down the middle. At the same time, Delegate Novotny asserts that individual counties would have maintained the discretion to decide the matters on which students are able to vote.

After the committee voted along partisan lines 14-7, Novotny expressed his disappointment in the failure of the bill. "It was unfortunate that the [bill] failed on a party-line vote," Novotny said in a press release. "I will always believe that gridlock is best for D.C. and not our school boards."

Student representation on Maryland school boards has greatly increased over time. Student representative positions exist in all 24 of the state's jurisdictions, and 8 of those localities allow students to vote on certain matters. In Baltimore County, students are prohibited from voting on budget and personnel matters, though are given a great deal of power on other issues.

This great deal of representation sparked a wave of controversy a few months ago, after the student member of the Howard County Board of Education acted as the tie-breaking vote on a motion to keep schools in a virtual learning format. In the wake of the vote, parents filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of student voting rights. In the ongoing legal battle, parents argue that students under 18 years old are not eligible to vote in elections, and therefore, should not have voting rights on school boards.

Along with increasing productivity, Delegate Novotny hoped the bill would take the pressure off students, who have previously been tasked with making tough decisions.

"Eliminating some of this gridlock relieving some of the pressure on the student member to make these large decisions, I think allows that student member to still have a voice on the board but yet not be the cause or solution to something that is so contested," Novotny said in January. "This will not remove the Student Member of the Board's ability to vote and will allow the elected school board members to work on behalf of the students in all our great counties in Maryland."

As Novotny stated, the legislation would not have stripped student members of their rights entirely. However, he still sparked plenty of outrage. Following the announcement of the legislation in January, student leaders across the state stepped up to challenge what they saw as an attack on student's perspectives.

"This legislation is an attack on the student voice under the guise of good governance. Delegate Novotny claims that this bill is only attempting to create a fail-safe for any ties that may occur," said Carmelli Leal, President of the Maryland Association of Student Councils and Legislative

Director of the Baltimore County Student Councils. "However, if this were true, then the student member would not be the only one being targeted by the piece of legislation. The subtext of the bill is clear; the student's voice is inferior to that of adults." Leal, who also testified before state representatives about the issue, believes that student voting rights should expand further, not be limited.

Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Education Association, is happy to see the legislation struck down. "We must teach our young people the importance of civic involvement and encourage them to actively engage at an early age," she said. "When students serve as members of their local School Boards, it brings the content we teach to life in real and relevant ways while also including students' voices in issues that impact them and their communities directly."

While the introduction of the legislation has sent frustration and anger throughout the education sphere, the bill ultimately failed, signaling a victory for those in favor of student voting rights. However, the legal fight in Howard County, which could have significant implications for student voting powers statewide, continues.

Members of the Baltimore County Board of Education holding a meeting in 2018.



Valentine's Day amidst Covid-19

By Christina Okoli

Covid-19 isn't the only thing in the chilly air. With Covid-19 still being rampant, people need something to get their minds off it all, and February has a wonderful holiday to help. Valentine's Day. It's not only a day for people coupled; it can be just as great for those who are happily single. Even though Valentine's Day has passed, there are a bunch of things to do before the months ends.



Slive.com

For instance, virtual meets is something we have all gotten familiar with. A lovely Facetime call to your 'sweethearts' will just

melt their hearts. Enjoy a nice tasty treat just for yourself or others if you want to share. Dairy Queen made a new Valentine's day theme ice cream cake called the "Red Velvet Blizzard Cupid Cake." The cake is the perfect size for two, but there's nothing wrong with a sweet indulgence for yourself even though Valentine's Day has passed.



DairyQueen.com

Valentine's Day isn't about the gifts, it's about the important people in your life and showing them a little gratitude or appreciation. During the quarantine, you can spend more time with your loved ones and make great memories in a time of a lot of history.

Facts About Valentine's Day

- ♥ Valentine's Day isn't a national holiday
- ♥ In 1861, the Heart Shaped boxes of chocolate were introduced by Richard Cadbury.
- ♥ Sweethearts were once Medical lozenges.
- ♥ Americans spend \$21.8 billion on Valentine's Day each year.

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