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In this issue:

- COVID-19: Tales from the Other Side: What Our Parents Are Experiencing
- Staying on Track: Senior and Junior Tasks in the face of COVID-19

Ideas for gift giving this year:

Zoom or FaceTime with an elderly or sick relative.

Do a favor for your mom or dad (or even a sibling!)

Spend time with a family member doing something they enjoy-you may learn something new about them!

Create an electronic thank you or holiday card for a teacher and let them know how much you appreciate their efforts.

Organize a virtual concert or recital with your friends and perform for your families or local nursing home.

Make someone breakfast in bed.

Do all of the household chores for a day.

Make a holiday card for your mailperson, trash, or recycle team and thank them for their efforts on your behalf.

Helpful Links

For info about SAT I, II, and AP Tests go to:

www.collegeboard.com

For info about ACT test go to:

www.act.org

For info about test optional schools go to:

www.fairtest.org/university/optional

For info about financial aid go to:

Dear Students, Family, and Colleagues:

This year has been filled with many lessons and silver linings. Virtually every facet of life has been impacted by the events of 2020 including but limited to COVID 19, racial injustice, and the economic crisis. It is our hope that we have been able to bring some level of light, a glimmer of hope, to an otherwise challenging and uncertain time. We sincerely thank you for allowing us to be a part of your journey.

We wish everyone a new year filled with strength, resilience, empathy, healing, health, and respect.

Happy Holidays!

Tales from the Other Side: What Our Parents Are Experiencing During COVID 19

As many, if not most, of our schools have returned to a 100% virtual model of learning, the voices of protest and concern have echoed across the country. Teachers want to be in the classroom because it is the best set of circumstances to educate, but this desire is countered by the concerns about spreading COVID 19. Parents are concerned about the quality of education their children are receiving with virtual learning and they are witness to the emotional and psychological impact isolation can have on their students. Some students are thriving in the virtual learning world, while others, are experiencing tremendous pressure and stress.

As we continue to engage in a three-way communication about these circumstances, we invited several parents to provide us feedback about their experiences in this now nine-month odyssey.

"Overwhelmed" and "frustrated" were the words most frequently used to describe how parents are faring of late. According to one father in California, managing his children's distance learning was his greatest challenge. There was, as he said, "No down time." Parents, particularly of younger children have to be "on" at all times to ensure their children are in the right Zoom or Google hangout. Making sure the microphones and cameras are on and confirming their children know how to access their assignments is proving to be a "full-time job, in addition to their **real** full-time-job." Parents of children with special needs, learning disabilities, and ADHD expressed a similar sentiment. One

www.FAFSA.ed.gov

www.fastweb.com

www.finaid.org

For college search info go to:

www.collegenavigator.gov

www.collegeprowler.com

To take a virtual tour of college campuses go to:

www.youniversitytv.com

www.youvisit.com

To learn about Colleges That Change Lives go to:

www.ctcl.org

Keeping on Track: Seniors: Finish up your college admissions essays and your Common App. Still struggling with those college essays? We can help you to choose the appropriate prompt, formulate some ideas, and finish with a final draft that captures the essence of who you are! We can also help you to present your best self on your application. Call today to schedule an appointment. Keep working on those classes, as some schools may require a first-quarter grade report.

Juniors: Don't think that because the pandemic is still raging you have an automatic pass to not contribute to the community. Attend club meetings virtually. Arrange clothing and food drives in a safely distanced manner. Start a letter writing project for residents at nursing homes. Be creative and innovative. Think outside of the box. Get your work done on time and to the best of your ability. If you plan to take the SAT or the ACT, be sure to practice your skills. Take advantage of practice tests. Attend virtual information sessions and tours of colleges. Speak with students you know who attend the schools to which you are considering applying.

TEST UPDATES

ACT: Here is the link for the latest ACT information:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/covid-19.html>

SAT: Here is the link for the latest SAT information:

<https://pages.collegeboard.org/sat-covid-19-updates>

Southern California mom said parents "have to provide more academic support than [they] had to during in-person learning."

Adding another layer to the sense of being overloaded is needing to figure out the "different online tools that the teachers use to support the textbook/Zoom learning." One Philadelphia mother said she felt that she "had to earn a Ph.D. in order to help [her child] navigate the online world of instruction." Parents suggested teachers and schools try to narrow the number of teaching platforms, creating continuity of the delivery of information and instruction. A Northern California father requested that teachers keep their email communications limited in volume and more concise. "One of the emails I got from my middle school just this last Friday was **1,400 words**, over 8k characters. That isn't an email, that is a short story. *Less Is More.*"

Parents also cited the degree of distractibility: in the virtual world of learning there are more distractions. Students may not have access to their own rooms, thus the sights and sounds of siblings, pets, parents, Amazon deliveries, etcetera are fair game for taking a student off course, regardless of the child's age. This experience can be frustrating for parents and students alike. Parents requested that-to the best of their ability- teachers try to reach out individually to the students to check in with them about their understanding of the material and directions, but most of all, how the students are doing in general.

Parents also shared how the switch to the virtual world has impacted them *beyond* the world of academics. Whereas life pre-COVID offered structure and predictability with the routine of school schedules and programming, this is no longer the case. Having to balance household and familial responsibilities in conjunction with overseeing their students' education is a new reality for many parents. One Philadelphia mother stated, "I am constantly feeling guilty that nothing is getting done." What might offset this struggle to find balance is regular and clear communication from teachers about what to expect on any given week including assignments, assessments, and projects.

Despite the many challenges parents are facing, they still feel hopeful. One dad stated he finds hope at the prospect of a new US president. A mother stated that her greatest source of hope was being witness to "...the little thing that I see and hear around me...strangers helping each other out, more patience, love, less anger. Seeing the big picture...the new normal...adapting and realizing that we are in this TOGETHER (and we always have been). What truly matters....The hope of returning to school "100%, in-person" is what helps one parent face the regular rigors of the current situation.

We are all experiencing challenges on a daily basis, some greater than others. Reach out to one another. Offer to help in whatever capacity you are able at that given moment in time, even if that just means listening. Even the smallest acts of kindness can make the biggest difference in someone's life.

Next month, we look forward to hearing from our students.

Pay it Forward: Do you know someone who is struggling with the shift to virtual classroom learning?? Send them this newsletter or forward us their contact information. We want to help!

Contact Us

<http://www.Academic-Ally.com>

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