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Senior Independent Project

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Senior Experience And Elementary Education During the Coronavirus

Being a senior during the coronavirus pandemic has been an experience that I will never forget about in my life. Living your life knowing in the future this experience will be in a history book is a devastating thing to think about. I had been waiting since seventh grade to finally have the senior year experience at Holy Child. Unfortunately, I did not realize the blessings I had at Holy Child until the day that they were gone. Being in a routine and doing the same thing every single day, I was sometimes ungrateful for the community at school and what a special place school is for me. I am one of the few people who have not said they “can't wait to leave” or have been excited to get their life outside of Holy Child started. I have loved almost every day that I have experienced and am so happy that I made the decision to come to Holy Child.

With that being said, these last few months have been really difficult. When school got cancelled for the first week, I was excited to have an extended spring break. I had no idea what was to come or how bad the situation would soon become. I remember sitting in the math office after the Model UN students had just gotten back from their conference. A few teachers were discussing how there was a possible coronavirus case at the event which was making many people anxious about if they had been exposed. Looking back to that moment, I think of how life is right now and regret how we spoke about it with such ease, almost laughing about the possibility of students having to quarantine after returning. When I first heard about the coronavirus, I never envisioned what it could take away from my last few months of high school.

I am missing out on prom, graduation, senior festivities, my internship and time with my friends and teachers. I have watched the classes before me enjoy these moments and have waited patiently until it was my turn to experience these events for myself. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done to make the situation better. As much as I want to have a normal end to my senior year, I know that it is not possible. Although that is a tough pill to swallow, students should not be fighting back at administration for doing the best that they can - we all want to go back to school. A drive by graduation is not what I had envisioned when thinking about it for all those years but it is better than having no celebration at all.

This experience has made me think even harder about my future and has made it much more clear for me that I want to pursue a career in elementary education. I have always had the dream of being a teacher in the back of my mind because of my love for kids. The last few years I have been a Sunday School teacher at my church and this past year I was able to help run the program which includes planning out lessons and crafts every week for the kindergarten through fourth grades and recruiting teachers for each classroom. Doing that has made me realize even more how much I love kids and how much I enjoy teaching them. I have been thinking about how hard online learning is for students who are used to face to face learning, as it has been extremely hard for me personally. I am a visual person who needs that in personal connection. Because it has been so hard for me, I can only imagine going through this experience as a younger student who is not used to using technology as much in the classroom.

Throughout this school year I have been thinking and planning about what I want to do for my senior project. I had an internship all planned out in which I would work in a first grade classroom in the elementary school that I attended. I was beyond excited to get experience in a

real classroom where I could really put my passion to the test and see what being a teacher was like. This was yet another experience Coronavirus took away from me too.

Fortunately, I was still able to have a small experience with Jamie Gabbriellini from Midland Elementary School. I did an interview with her and also observed one of her Google Hangouts with her class. One of the biggest issues that she has been having with her first graders has been getting them to focus during “class time”. It is hard to attain their attention when they have toys and other things going on in the background. She also said it is difficult to know what the students are retaining and how much they are actually understanding without getting immediate feedback. One of Jamie’s biggest blessings in this time is her ability to communicate through technology. It is difficult sometimes for her to get the children’s undivided attention so technology resources like Google Hangout, Screencastomatic and Google Draw really help her and her students have the most effective learning environment. Although it has been hard for some of her students to be away from the classroom, she believes that in this time teachers can only do their best to try to keep the learning going.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought much sadness to so many people’s lives. Seniors in highschool and college are not the only people who have had things taken away from them, but it has negatively affected seniors all over the world who have been waiting for these milestones in their life to happen. Even though the end to my senior year did not go as planned, that does not change the last four amazing years I have had in highschool. I have missed out on lots of things that I have been looking forward to for a long time but I was still able to have a positive experience with my senior independent project. I have realized that it is not the situation that you are in, but the reaction you have towards that situation is what really matters. I am lucky

to have had the experience I did at Holy Child because it has given me so many different opportunities and a wonderful sense of community that I will forever cherish. Even though it did not end as I hoped it would, the journey at Holy Child over these past years has been amazing.