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School During a Pandemic

Online learning. A couple of years ago the initial thoughts brought to mind would've been online school for students who were home-schooled or didn't like the school environment. Now, online learning has a whole new definition. Online learning is sitting in your room for up to eight hours a day and sometimes even more. Online learning is having to stare at your teacher on a small three by three inch box on your screen. It's getting headaches the first couple of weeks because you're not used to being on your computer this long. But, it's also finishing homework early and being excused from class thirty minutes early. It's being able to wake up twenty minutes before class and not miss a beat. There's two sides to learning from home, the only problem is they stem from the same base. Because learning online comes with certain advantages and drawbacks, it puts the school system in a situation where it must pick between what's best for the student and what's best for the school as a whole.

In layman's terms, the wants and the needs of a school and the student can be seen as a Venn diagram. In one circle resides everything a student needs in order to thrive and succeed in school. Social interactions, lunch, breaks, teacher instruction, and sleep are usually in this circle. While in the other circle you find everything a school needs to function and run on a daily basis. This shape includes more of the logistic side of things like funds, teachers, classrooms, and order. Now all Venn diagrams have an area where the circles overlap. It's in this weird oblong shape that the common interest of both parties appear. Here we find the goal the two share in

common, producing a smart and responsible student. Now of course there's more to just these two aspects of a student and a lot goes into the process like encouraging students and creating suitable environments for them. Because at the end of the day a school's mission is to produce not only good students but resourceful and responsible people who are ready to take on the world.

This mindset is great as it gives the school a clear direction that everyone will be heading in together as a team. Furthermore a study in 2008 showed "High expectations of students have repeatedly been shown to have a positive impact on students' performance" (Lynch). Thus it makes perfect sense why a school would be so focused on how a child performs within the classroom as for the student it's quite self-explanatory as grades are one of the biggest factors for getting into college. The second aspect is just as important as a student can have all the knowledge in the world but what they do with it depends on their character. Thus in the world we once knew school system's would be focused on grades and a student as a whole and both schools and students would be able to receive the resources they needed to meet their shared goals.

Unfortunately we are no longer in 2019 and prior and the world has changed drastically not only with the introduction but at this point the acclimatising to Covid-19. Due to Covid and the restrictions it brought, it affected both big circles of the Venn Diagram in unimaginable ways. The student's circle has shrunk down to a miniscule size and most of what was it in before no longer fits. The Corona virus has taken away two key aspects needed for a student to succeed in the form of restricting social interactions and face to face teacher instruction. For instance "In the fall, roughly 44% of colleges were primarily or fully online compared to 27% that were primarily or fully in person. Another 21% were hybrid" (Dickler). Proving how not only high

schools but many other campuses were deprived of social interactions between students affecting all students. Furthermore in the Fairfax County of Virginia due to the new learning environment “The percentage of middle school and high school students earning F’s in at least two classes jumped by 83 percent, from 6 percent of those students to 11 percent” (Natanson). Thus it can truly be seen how important being on campus and social interactions are to a student as without them it spells a recipe for disaster.

The students circle isn’t the only one affected as the school system’s circle in the Venn Diagram also shrinks pushing some things out because of Covid-19. For example teachers weren’t able to instruct from their classes early on but now it seems like that problem has gone away as teachers are allowed on campus at most schools. Albeit, the school side of things has still suffered in the way that it’s much harder to teach over a screen than it is to in person and maintaining order has become a challenge in most schools.

But now due to the Corona virus these demands must be met in other ways. For example schools have quickly adapted and as mentioned earlier teachers are already back on campus and are allowed to teach from there. Furthermore schools have figured out the best schedules that work for them and their students optimizing their time spent on the computer. Thus the school system has managed to almost recover all the needs and wants they previously had underneath regular scenarios. By no means is everything running like a well oiled machine, but most schools seemed to somewhat figure out their side of the Venn Diagram. Now the same can’t be said for the student’s side.

This doesn’t mean students are being asked to perform in the worst conditions possible but neither the best. Even before Covid-19, no matter the school, compromise between the schools and students could be difficult so now during the pandemic situations have worsened.

But this doesn't stop schools from trying and often succeeding at making the environment the best possible for students because they want to see them succeed.

Both schools and students are starting to realize during this pandemic that both sides don't have to be pitted against each other as primarily students so often think it's supposed to be. During these unprecedented times both groups have recognized that they're just one big community in this together. In the end if everyone works together for a solution to the problems faced during this pandemic, then the school won't have to pick between the two's needs as they will be able to supply both.

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