

# For high school seniors, coronavirus brings a sad ending and unexpected lessons

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Annalisa D'Aguilar, age 18, is a senior at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts in New York City. Photo: Aisha D'Aguilar

Annalisa D'Aguilar went to school one day in mid-March. She did not know it would be her last day. The hallways were empty. Many of her fellow students had stopped showing up. Fears of the coronavirus swept New York City. She is a senior in high school there. The city has been hit hard by coronavirus.

The next day, school was canceled.

## **Students Forced To Make Sacrifices**

There are about 3.7 million high school seniors across the country. Schools have been closed for most of them. Grades are unfinished. Friendships have been socially distanced. Prom dresses hang in closets. They may never be worn. For some, the graduation ceremony may not happen.

Students said they understand why. Everyone has to make sacrifices right now. They are seeing the effects of the virus in their own lives. D'Aguilar has a family member who got the virus.

"It's easy to be really mad about something like this," said Piper MacIntyre. She is a senior in Seattle, Washington. Still, she understands she has to give up things to stop the virus from spreading. "It's sad, but I don't feel cheated."

Few schools have said graduation ceremonies will be canceled. Still, many seniors realize it could happen. It is tough news to hear.

Mia Jones is a senior in Washington, D.C. "Even though it's just walking across the stage, it's a big deal," said Jones. Not everyone will go to college, she notes. "This is the last time we'll all be together."

### **Trying To Keep A Positive Outlook**

Zac Shell is a senior in Lawton, Oklahoma. He and his friends try to joke about the situation. It helps to make each other feel better.

"But I've had friends who have cried because they're so upset," Shell said. "We're confused and dazed. For the rest of my life I'll remember this."

For senior athletes, their last season ended suddenly.

Dmetrio Cavens-Summers is a senior in Stockton, California. He is a track athlete and football star. Cavens-Summers tries to look at the bigger picture. His mother got a cough recently. He said he was scared. She got better, though. Still, he reads news from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He posts their updates on his Instagram page. He wants to help inform other people his age.

Mostly, he is just trying to keep it together.

"No one was prepared for this, but the best thing it has taught me is to be calm and be humble," he said. "I'm just keeping my mind focused on what I need to do and to stay calm for my teammates and my family."

### **Concerns About The Future**

Important high school events have been disrupted across the country. However, many seniors recognize the importance of this historic moment. They realize it will change the world in ways big and small.

For many seniors, uncertainty lies ahead. Many will now be looking for jobs. However, businesses are struggling. Many have had to close during the coronavirus.

There's uncertainty, too, for students planning to continue their education. Colleges and universities have lost money. Some seniors worry that their college career will be delayed. Others were expecting to receive financial aid. They are waiting to hear if it still will come through.

Emma Dabelko is a senior in Athens, Ohio. She said that it is not always fun living through a historical event like this. At the same time, she said it is also amazing.

"This is going to be such a major event that people will be taught about it and look back on it for a long time," Dabelko said.

She said the pandemic also teaches lessons that would not be learned in a classroom.

She said this time could be a learning moment for a lot of people "to think about who we value and what we value in our everyday life," she said. "I know I'm going to value some of the small things that I hadn't before."

## Quiz

1 Read the paragraph below from the section "Students Forced To Make Sacrifices."

*There are about 3.7 million high school seniors across the country. Schools have been closed for most of them. Grades are unfinished. Friendships have been socially distanced. Prom dresses hang in closets. They may never be worn. For some, the graduation ceremony may not happen.*

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

- (A) How will high school seniors finish their work?
- (B) How have school closings affected students?
- (C) When have students shopped for the prom?
- (D) When will schools decide to open again?

2 Read the section "Trying To Keep A Positive Outlook."

Which selection explains how Zac Shell and his friends are helping each other to feel better?

- (A) He and his friends try to joke about the situation.
- (B) "But I've had friends who have cried because they're so upset," Shell said.
- (C) "We're confused and dazed. For the rest of my life I'll remember this."
- (D) For senior athletes, their last season ended suddenly.

3 How did the coronavirus affect students who were planning on going to college?

- (A) They are ending their athletic seasons early.
- (B) They have started posting updates on Instagram.
- (C) They worry that their college careers will be delayed.
- (D) They decided to get jobs instead of going to college.

4 How did Emma Dabelko change because of the pandemic?

- (A) She has learned to value small things about everyday life.
- (B) She wants to live through more historical events like this.
- (C) She moved to a new school in Athens, Ohio.
- (D) She realized that some friends will skip college.