



# THE VOYAGER

NOVEMBER 2020



## A NOTE FROM THE NEWSPAPER STAFF

BACK TO SCHOOL!

THIS ISSUE IS LOADED WITH NEW STORIES, FROM THE EFFECTS OF COVID ON A FRESHMEN TO THE US PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM. PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE ISSUE TO FIND OUT!

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*On the front cover: The Blue Moon on Halloween night illuminated the beautiful night sky.*

## ***BEING A FRESHMAN DURING COVID-19*** BY **SIDDHI PATEL**

The transition from one grade to the next is always hard for many students, no matter how young or old. Having to go through the process again of the first day of school, new teachers, new classmates, and also the transition from summer vacation to fall. With this said, one of the hardest transitions would have to be from middle school to high school. Not only do these students go through the yearly routines, but a completely new school with even more new students, teachers, and building. There are multiple lifestyle changes and various things you have to become familiar with fast. High school is where you start paving your way to adulthood and what your goals are in life in general, not only in school. You learn how to balance the new academic pressure of different classes, teachers, clubs, and teams with a social life with friends, family, parties, and celebrations.

All of this was already a difficult and learning experience on its own, but the new school year of 2020-2021 has something else in store for not only freshmen but all students in school. Being a freshman, you want to figure everything out, so you start to feel comfortable as the school year goes on. You try to figure out where your classes are, where to sit at lunch, find new friends, and start getting on a routine with homework, tests, and exams.

However, this year, much has changed with the style of education. With almost everything being virtual, including classes, homework, tests, and working with others. In this case, freshmen have mixed feelings about the situation. Many feel relieved with the fact that they don't need to worry about things like class placement, lunch, or getting used to the 'going to high school' routine. On the other hand, they feel like they are missing out on the high school freshman experience, working with classmates and friends, learning hands-on, and interacting with others. It's

harder to be a part of a club because of all the online meets instead of meeting in-person to discuss and actually "meet new people". The main factor would be the "socializing" part as it's much more difficult and awkward for many to talk to others through a screen.

This is a new experience for everyone, especially freshmen. What we know is that for now this is how things are going to work and change can be a turning point based on circumstances. At this point we can focus and do our best during these times!

## ***THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SMELL AND MEMORY*** BY MEEKA VARDI

Have you ever been going about your day when, suddenly, wonderful fumes of delicious food flood up your nose, filling your senses with delight and even bringing back fond memories? There is usually that one scent that creeps up on you that takes you back and allows you to relive your childhood perhaps. Maybe it is the smell of pine that allows you to close your eyes and experience Christmas with your family as a child once more. Or maybe it is the lovely aroma of wildflowers as the sun beats down upon your glowing face that transports you into a past event. For many, this phenomenon is a wonderful occurrence, as it allows you to relive your past and recreate pleasant memories. However, this is not always the case. For some, certain smells can trigger unwanted memories. The *deja vu* effect can interfere with one's ability to cope, as the recollections are often very strong and vivid.

In an article by the Harvard Gazette entitled "What The Nose Knows", the author describes this occurrence as "the Proustian Moment". Named after French author Marcel Proust, this sensory overload is explained as "a sensory experience that triggers a rush of memories often long past, or even seemingly forgotten". Harvard's Venkatesh Murthy, Raymond Leo Erikson Life Sciences Professor and chair of the Department

of Molecular and Cellular Biology states that smells go through the olfactory bulb (structure in the brain that sends information throughout the body) which then goes through the amygdala and hippocampus (two structures in the brain that also deal with memory as well as emotion). Next time you walk by a freshly mowed lawn and reminisce about the good times, when you were just a child with not a worry in sight, when you had field day at elementary school, remember how miraculous the brain and its systems really are. In the end, the nose knows no nescience.

## ***RACIAL AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN U.S. PUBLIC EDUCATION BY DANIAL TANVEER***

New Jersey is often ranked as the state with one of the most exceptional public education systems in the nation, and one may say well, yeah? After all it is home to top ivy league schools like Princeton that produces immense amounts of world altering innovators as well as home to schools like ours, Par-Hills High school where every student is actively aspiring to develop their abilities and passions in a complex and diverse environment. However, “best education in the nation” is yet not a reality accessible to all in the state. Many of the common “necessities” for a productive learning environment that we experience and take for granted daily, like internal and external safety for students, extraordinary variety of clubs/organizations, an in school library, access to technology, high amount of high level courses/electives, and etc, are a mere dream for many public schools across New Jersey and the nation. Schools where even having adequate amounts of textbooks or directed teaching resources is usually straining. And in light of current events as race has become a heated topic, it's time to re-examine the public education system in America focusing in on three main points: what race and economic factors has to do with it, the effects of the unequal system, and what can be done right now to solve the problem.

Race is often a main theme that appears when discussing any form of inequality, especially in education, and for good reason. As a major percentage of black and latino students throughout the United States are raised and brought up in less than affluent communities, it can affect their educational prospects in major ways. One being that the schools where these students most likely attend are not suitably equipped with the basic “amenities” of education such as well maintained facilities (i.e bathrooms, libraries, classrooms, etc.), educational/learning resources (i.e. textbooks, projectors, technology, teachers/staff, etc), most importantly, fair access to advanced A.P. and STEM courses or even at times, basic level courses. A survey by the U.S. Department of Education displays this gap indicating that nearly 81% of Asian-American students and white students respectively have fair access to a variety of high level STEM and A.P. courses, however only 57% of black students and 60% of latino students have access to these resources. This puts black and latino students in a “infinite”, cycle as not having access to these courses and poor instruction from poorly trained teachers results in lower SAT scores which negatively affect their future career prospects and success as black and latino students land lower wage jobs further leading to residence in poor areas with children often continuing down the same the same cycle. Another major way is how the culture and environment of the areas where the students often reside leaves a deep “staining” affect on their actions, personality, and outlook with black and latino students, unfortunately experiencing more exposure to gang violence, illegal drugs and activity, and poverty. In addition, extracurriculars (i.e sports, clubs, student bodies, organizations, etc) are a pure luxury for poorly funded public schools as things like football/track fields for example, are ill affordable and even if they are, maintaining them with the limited resources available is nearly impossible.

Shifting on to another important point, the effects of an unequally

funded public education system has irreparable consequences for society and the nation. The major effect being that an entire segment of society is “isolated”, uninterested, and virtually uninvolved in scientific and technological discovery, which is the crucial “fuel” of tomorrow's America. This is what society is and what drives and motivates technological and scientific advancement. The greater threat is that this piece of society is gradually growing due to governmental neglect of the issue. Other major consequences as can be further deduced from the above section, are that the racial inequality that has plagued this country for years will not be altered as black and latino kids will constantly go through the same cycle of low socioeconomic status repeatedly; an entire group of children/people will not have the same ability in which to pursue their passions.

The final, long pending question that has been asked every expert, person, politician, yet to be answered is, “How exactly should education inequality be solved?” However, the real question we all should ask is what should be done right now. Well, the answer to that comes in a few simple points. Point one being that the government should enforce the equal distribution of funds to public schools disregarding the type of area or population (as that often is a factor considered while state govt. funding education) and should commit to further taxing the more affluent and wealthy residents of the state. The second point being that the financial and economic status of the different states can contribute to unequal schooling across the nation and that the central government should focus more on allocating further financial resources to poorer states (i.e Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, etc). An additional point is that the govt. should routinely assess the quality of education in different communities to ensure that “No student is left behind” by the system as well as people within different communities and areas should try to socially contribute (through donations) to the schools in need.

To seal the case, education and knowledge are often the “lifelines” and tools of society through which people can create meaningful change in their communities and the world. It is the greatest source of empowerment and the “engine” of creativity. After all, Nelson Mandela the man who freed South Africa from the chains of racism and apartheid once famously said, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” And ensuring the equal access to it is a core responsibility of the government and American society, a role that has been seriously neglected over the past decades as the economic and racial gaps have widened.

## ***ADDITIONAL PICTURES BY ANGELA DUSZKIEWICZ***

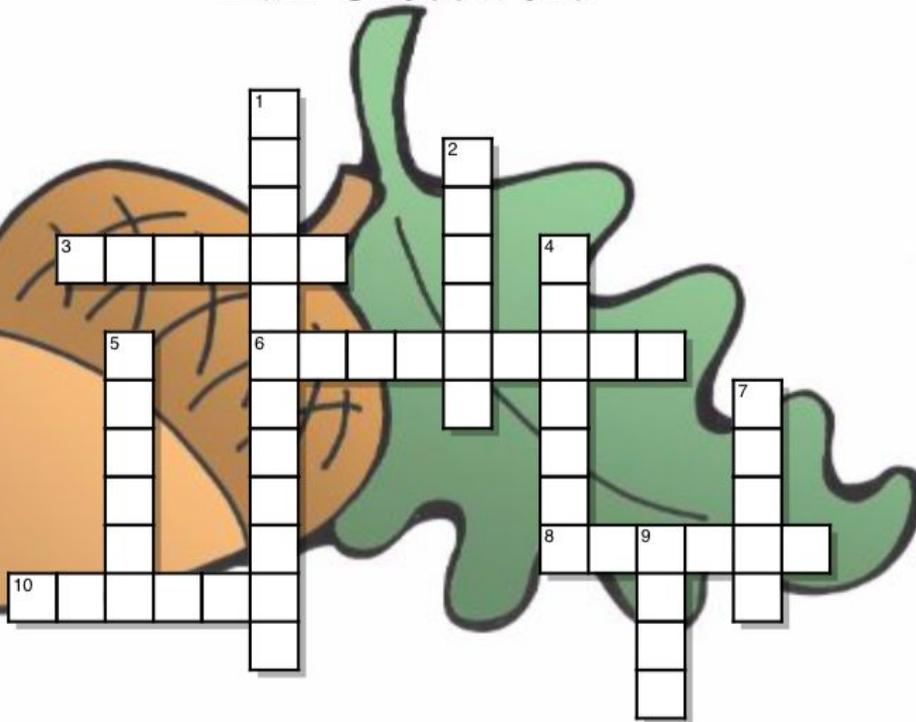


*This picture was taken at the Powdermill View on a chilly day! The winter weather is coming fast as we enter November!*

# CROSSWORD

## NOVEMBER

### Fall Crossword



#### ACROSS

- 3 Nuts from an oak tree
- 6 Scares away birds in a crop field
- 8 Large bird usually cooked on Thanksgiving
- 10 Another word for "fall"

#### DOWN

- 1 The fourth Thursday in November
- 2 They fall from trees
- 4 The gathering of crops
- 5 Outer layer of clothing to keep warm
- 7 Drink made from apples
- 9 Leaf gathering yard tool

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