

Middleview

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Great Neck South Middle School, Great Neck, NY 11020

Winter 2020-21

Coping with the Coronavirus Pandemic

by Anant Gupta

The pandemic has enormously impacted all of our lives. From our events being canceled to being separated from our friends and family, many challenges have arisen. Dealing with these hardships can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Even social distancing, a public health action necessary to prevent the spread of Covid can make us feel isolated from the rest of the world. We have therefore decided to seek help from our school psychologists to give some friendly tips on how to cope with and prevent the negative mental effects of Covid-19, affecting you.

Here is my interview with Ms. Ferguson.

May I ask for your credentials and experience in the field of psychology?

I have a Master of Education in School Psychology; I am currently in my 13th year as a practicing school psychologist, much of that time at South High School.

What are some ways you think people are mentally hurt from this experience and what would be your advice to them?

I think people have been struggling and coping in many different ways. In terms of what I see with the students with whom I work, I see students struggling with the loss of structure and routine in their lives - certainly with regard to school and in other parts of their lives (sports, activities, jobs, etc.). I also see students struggling with the uncertainty of it all - it's difficult not to know when things will be back to "normal" and to perhaps feel that you don't have much control over what is to come. And of course, there is the struggle related to a loss of social connectedness. I think many students have found ways to stay connected to their friends, but it can be a struggle and it doesn't look or feel like it did a year ago.

In terms of advice, first I would want students who may be struggling to know that they are not alone in what they are feeling. Many of us are struggling in one way or another as we continue to cope with the changes in our lives due to the pandemic.

For those students who may feel they are struggling more than others, I would want them to know that there are people they can reach out to for help. Certainly in school, they can reach out to a teacher or guidance counselor or mental health staff - we are here to help and support you.

And beyond that, I would encourage students to focus on those things that they have some control over - taking care of themselves, spending time with friends and family, doing things they enjoy.

What are some practices you use to relieve stress in your daily life to offset Covid-19?

For me personally, I make it a priority to get outside everyday - despite the cold, rain, or snow. I try to take a walk, whether it's with my daughter or friends or colleagues. Fresh air and exercise

can be restorative and given how much time many of us are spending inside and in our homes these days, it's a nice change of scenery!

I also prioritize seeing friends. It's not always easy these days to bundle up and head outside, but spending an hour chatting with a friend can really help recharge me.

And, I will admit, I've taken to baking to help relieve stress as well! I find it calming to be in the kitchen focusing on a recipe. And it doesn't hurt to have some cookies or muffins to snack on either.

Are there any friendly tips you have for our readers on how to cope during Covid-19?

I think prioritizing self-care is so important. At a most basic level, I encourage students to stick with a schedule and routine (as best they can), even if their days no longer feel so routine. Get a good night's sleep, eat well, drink water, and get outside for some exercise. If you're a remote or hybrid student, make sure you get up on school days and be ready to go when classes start, just as if you were attending school. Maintaining structure in our days, in and of itself, can be stress-relieving.

And one of my biggest tips would be to take technology breaks. Put down the phone, shut off the iPad, walk away from the computer or television. Many of us are spending much more time in front of a screen, and it is so important to make sure you detach from that - get outside, see friends (in ways that are safe and comfortable for you), read a book, play a board game with your family - whatever it is that is fun and enjoyable for you. Technology has definitely allowed us to stay connected in ways that we've needed over the last 10 months, but it's important now to make sure you are taking some time away from the screens as well.

Olympics Fun Facts

1. The first Olympic Games took place in the 8th century B.C. in Olympia, Greece.

2. The six colors of the Olympic rings - blue, yellow, black, green, red, and the white background - were chosen because every nation's flag contains at least one of them.

3. The United States has won more medals (2,189) at the Summer Games than any other country.

4. The 2020 Summer Olympics will begin on Friday, July 23, 2021 and end on Sunday, August 8.

5. South Middle School will be holding its own 2021 Olympics. When? Where? How? Stay tuned...
Facts accessed from FactMonster.com and AthlonSports.com.

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The First Days of the 46th President

by Austin Cheng

President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. has been sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. Some major issues he plans to work on are systemic racism and SARS-CoV-2. At the time of publication, President Biden has already begun working on these issues.

COVID-19

Biden wants to “beat COVID-19 and get our country back on track” using 7 key points: testing and tracing, PPE, national guidance, treatments and vaccines, protecting those at risk, International COVID defenses, and a nationwide mask mandate. Biden wants to double testing and invest in at home testing kits. He will also use the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of masks, and other PPE equipment. He plans to provide evidence-based guidance for Covid. He wants to give guidance for reopening schools, supporting small businesses, and the economic stress for families. He has a \$25 billion plan to invest in vaccines to make sure every American can get the vaccine for free. He also wants to protect those at risk by creating a “COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force”, which was proposed by Vice-President Kamala Harris.

Racism

Biden, unlike Trump, acknowledges that racism is a big problem in the United States. As you may know Biden is a devout Catholic, saying “We’re all God’s children; we should treat each other as we would like to be treated ourselves.” In line with this thinking, Biden has signed numerous executive orders regarding race. Some include: reversing Trump’s “Muslim Ban”, and reversing Trump’s immigration policy. He also signed an executive order to help underserved communities. Doing this benefits all in this country; closing racial wage gaps, creating housing, and much more can increase this country’s gross domestic product by 5 trillion dollars. Biden will also use the Domestic Policy Council (DPC) in an effort to close systemic barriers and provide equal access to benefits. He wants to close the barriers that don’t let people in underserved areas enroll for government programs and benefits. This executive order also gives people of color an opportunity to work for Federal agencies. This DOES NOT apply to private enterprises. But at the end of this order, this is written: “Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with the provisions of this order.”

I believe that President Biden has already done much

more regarding these issues than the previous Trump administration. Donald Trump both underplayed the pandemic and disregarded racism in America. He said on the subject of Charlottesville: “You also had people that were very fine people, on both sides.” Neo-Nazis and White Nationalist are not very fine people. What he said very clearly showed his own racism. And early on when speaking about the Coronavirus he said, “We have it under control, It’s one person coming from China, and we have it under control. It’s going to be just fine.” Clearly it wasn’t under control because 215 people died on the day he went out of office, alone. Biden, on the other hand, is more realistic in saying there will be a “dark winter.” It has indeed become very dark with 447,00 deaths on the day this is being written.

Biden also acknowledges the problem of racism in America. In an interview with CBS’s Norah O’Donnell he said, “it’s not just in law enforcement, it’s across the board. It’s in housing, it’s in education, and it’s in everything we do.” This is very much true, but hopefully the administration will continue to address these important issues.

Climate Change

by Richard Xu

Today, climate change is having a major impact on people’s daily lives. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, over 63% of people in the United States have said that climate change has already affected their local community. This number rises to over 70% for people who live near the coast.

Still, there are many people who deny that there is any change in the climate. Some point out the fact that the raise in temperature is actually slowing in recent years, showing that nature will ultimately take care of itself.

In reality, however, these claims are not true. According to an article published by the Scientific American by Mark Fischetti,

the rate of the rise in temperature on Earth is decreasing because the heat is being stored in the oceans, not because the climate is actually recovering. This, however, is not a long term solution because the oceans can only store so much heat in them.

Many people today still regard climate change as a long term issue that will not have a major impact on us in the near future. Just last year, however, a record number of costly disasters struck the US. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, 12 tropical storms which formed in the Atlantic made landfall, a wildfire devastated the western regions of the United States, 3 tornadoes, 7 tropical cyclones, and at least 10 other major weather events has caused over \$95 billion in

damage last year in the United States alone.

If you think that this is just an isolated incident, here’s another fun fact: all five warmest years in America have occurred since 2012. Even worse, the IPCC predicts that Atlantic hurricanes will continue to increase in intensity over the next few years. This shows that climate change is far from being over. However, it is not too late. By using renewable energies over fossil fuels, we can help reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Although the transition to renewable energy will certainly be costly, it will let us develop a more sustainable economy and will benefit us tremendously in the long run.

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Why Zoom's Breakout Rooms Are Broken

by Ben Pitt Stoller

Zoom is the tool that many schools use to host remote school lessons. It's easy to use, safe for Covid-19 concerns, and has many fun features like virtual backgrounds and emoji reactions. But why is it that the Breakout Rooms don't seem to work?

The Problem:

So, Mr. Fringleblorp wants you to talk about the book you've been reading. However, he can't get anyone to pipe up. Then, he sees these three words, "Open Breakout Rooms." They seem to have a glowing aura coming from them. Gingerly, he moves his finger over the button. Using all of his might, he is able to press the glorious button and open the rooms. Salvaged from this terrible purgatory of profile pictures on gray backgrounds (for the last time, they're not called avatars!), he feels secure.

But then, disaster strikes! He decides to investigate these rooms of the breaking. He enters the first one. It is a ghost town. Nobody has even come close to turning their microphones on, let alone their cameras. There is a single "..." in the chat. Of course, this must be an anomaly, right? No. No, no, no! Mr. Fringleblorp is devastated, and he almost perishes from the trauma that this incident has caused.

The Solution:

These rooms seem quite scary, but worry not. We should be able to fix this dilemma.

Use Breakout Rooms Sparingly

I would argue that one of the most important parts of remote learning is playing to your strengths. As much as you'd like it to, Zoom can't perfectly recreate everything that a regular school day has to offer. Although I am going to try and fix the Breakout Rooms, it's better to avoid using them when possible.

Have Minimal Supervision

This may seem counterintuitive to some people, but I really think that less supervision is the way to go. Supervision just makes it so that the kids feel like this is a boring lesson, and the only way to get some of the shy students to budge is by making them feel comfortable.

Also, something that teachers don't realize is that when they go into the breakout room, it is hard to notice. I've been caught off guard by teachers jumping in right in the middle of doing something. Plus, sometimes they come in at a bad time. More than once, I've had teachers think that our group was being silent the entire time when I was just between two sentences.

Allow Students to Participate in Ways They Feel Comfortable

For one reason or another, some students just will never participate in Breakout Rooms. It's always better to allow students to talk without their cameras on, or even just through the chat. It will make students feel more comfortable, and that's the best way to have Breakout Rooms work. Of course, having your video and audio on can still be encouraged, just not to the point where it feels annoying.

A Short Tangent

On a similar note, I feel that having your cameras off should not necessarily be disallowed. Of course, during attendance and during presentations they should be on (unless there is some sort of technical problem) but I feel that having your cameras on for 40 minutes at a time is excessive. In middle school, students really feel self-conscious about their appearance. I try and not let it affect me too much, but on Zoom the problem is amplified. When there's a camera pointed at me, I feel like everyone's watching/

judging me and my posture and even my room. Of course, this isn't true, but it still stresses me out. Also, I feel that I only "look good" when I put myself in an uncomfortable position physically, which is not very fun.

My Experiences

I feel that I've actually had some of the widest variety of experiences in Breakout Rooms. One group that I'm in works really well together. We always go in the same group and finish what we need to do. I actually didn't know anyone in this group before going in, and now I feel like I know them; a classic success story. Of course, every other room I've been in has been a failure. I think that what made that room work so well is a combination of luck (our personalities mixed well) and also that the groups were so lenient. In that class, after the first couple days of being in pre-chosen groups, the breakout rooms became open and anybody could swap to any group. I think this is the best way to do it. Of course, the same strategies that you use for assigning group projects can be used here.

The Takeaway

As I said at the beginning, play to Zoom's strengths. Breakout Rooms are hard to use right and effectively. Use the Zoom chat, use virtual backgrounds, emoji reactions, websites like Kahoot and Edpuzzle, and maybe Breakout Rooms occasionally. Breakout Rooms don't work because it's just so much easier to not participate, shut yourself off, and go bang your head against the wall (or whatever new trend the kids are doing these days).



Photo credit: www.middleweb.com

January 6, 2021

by Gavin Li

It was a normal day on January 6th. The 6th graders were watching Silly Joe on the Zoom meeting for Happy Campers and eventually the Zoom was finally over. Many of us took a break and then flipped on the TV only to see that Warnock had won his Georgia runoff election and that Ossoff was slightly ahead of Perdue.

It was a normal news day until this happened: "We are currently monitoring that election, but we have some incoming news that a mob has surrounded the capitol building and it appears they have managed to breach the building and are overwhelming security." And just like that, 2021 was already in flames. The mob had gone to see Trump speak, and he repeated that the election was rigged, but this time it went farther. They stormed the Capitol and I think you know what happened from there.

The mob quickly overwhelmed the security of the Capitol and they broke in to try and change the election results. By the time the smoke settled 5 people were dead. The nation was left in dismay on what the heck happened. Democrats have begun impeachment proceedings, and Trump was banned from most social media platforms, including on Twitter.

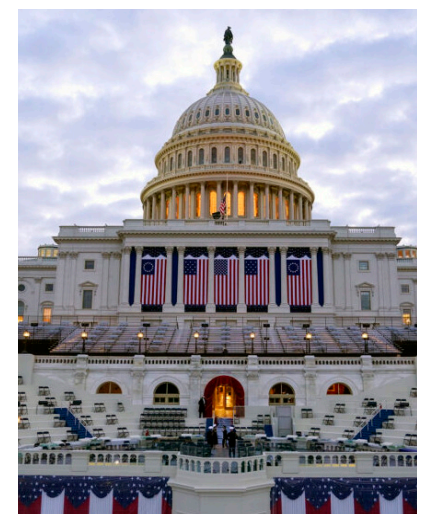


Photo credit: news.harvard.edu

Mountain Biking During Quarantine

by Sam Fisk

During the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, not everything was bad. After the announcement, during my technology class, of the closing of school, all the teachers scoffed at the idea of more than two days off. All of us kids were hoping for a break from school. When we learned that there was going to be no school for a while, we all cheered. But after a few weeks, reality set in. Quarantine was going to be dreadful. Luckily I watched a few YouTube videos and found a new hobby, Mountain Biking.

Mountain biking, the sport perfect for quarantine. Team sports and even individual sports games were canceled worldwide. Soccer, baseball, basketball, running, swimming, volleyball, and wrestling were just a few of the many different sports brought to a halt by the dreaded virus, COVID-19. Mountain biking, an individual sport, is relatively safe, compared to others. Even luckier for me, while the coronavirus policies were very strict, I could learn the basic skills including bunnyhopping, dropping off ledges, and even learning tricks like wheeling. Then, once the restrictions were slowly lifted, I would be able to go to parks. Unfortunately, my master plan did not work out. Even though I already had a bike, I had gotten it 4 years prior and I was much too big for it. I also overestimated my ability to learn new skills. Even though I was already

comfortable on a bike, I had no idea on what to do. I watched some more YouTube videos until I could finally lift my front wheel. Even though this was a big step, half of the bunnyhop, it was the easy half. After spending countless hours trying to lift my back wheel, it still evaded me. I tried for hours, eventually getting blisters on my hands.

One day, my dad took me to our neighborhood park, once it was open. At this point, he had not had a bike since college. He gave me some much needed tips. All of the sudden, it clicked. I could lift my back wheel. I spent some more time in the next few days learning to connect it. However, there are two types of bunnyhops. I had only learned the easier one. Once again I hurled myself and the bike into the air for hours. After a period of about 2 ½ weeks, I got the hang of it. In total, to get from on the ground to the more advanced bunnyhop, it took roughly 50 hours over two months.

By this time, my dad had found one of the last available bikes in his size. He got back into biking and began relearning skills. I had also found a more compatible bike, also one of the last ones, luckily in my size.

With the proper equipment and the ability to jump, I worked on other skills. I learned how to drop off of ledges. Although this is easy to do on foot, it is much harder on a bike. In a natural riding position, the front wheel will drop first, lead-

ing to some nasty crashes

One of my 2 major crashes happened. There was a 12 inch ledge leading across a wide path. I decided to try it, under my dad's supervision. Although I was wearing a helmet, knee pads, gloves, and my dad had a sleeping bag to throw, the obvious happened. My front wheel dropped, I fell over the handlebars, and my right thumb jammed into a wall. I was unable to ride for 2 weeks. At this point, I had grown tired of jumping off curbs and riding through grass.

Since most parks were still closed, I built some jumps in my backyard. I started off small at around 6 inches^a but by August, I had made a 3 foot high wooden jump and teeter totter^b and a raised platform around 15 feet long^c. I learned some much needed skills about woodworking as well. I had a few ugly crashes on these, along with my dad, but walked away unhurt. My whole family started biking together and it soon became a family activity. We taught my 5 year old sister how to ride a two-wheeler and soon she was speeding around our house almost as fast as the older kids.

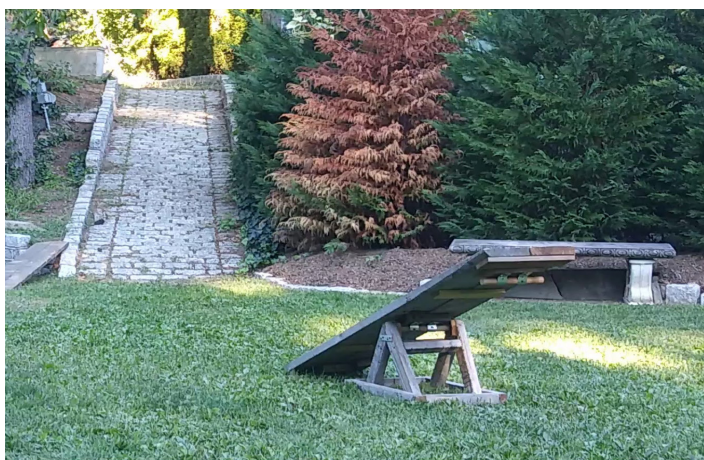
My dad and I finally got the chance to go to Cunningham Park. It was the perfect day, warm, not too humid, and neither too wet nor dusty. The park was empty and we had a blast. I became totally obsessed with biking. I rode down stairs, jumped curbs, built berms, and had a lot of fun. I learned about

other parks and went there too. I rode bigger and bigger obstacles including a full set of stairs and even a 4 ½ foot drop.

In time, my second major crash happened. I was riding down some stairs in November and started to drift to the side. My handlebar got jammed under a hand-rail, and I flipped over and to the side. I injured my hip and shoulder badly. Fortunately, nothing was broken, just deep bruising. Surprisingly, I healed up in a record 9 days. On day 1 and 2 I was crawling out of bed but by day 8 and 9, I was walking normally. I still have a scar on my back, 2 months later, but there is no noticeable permanent damage. I was back to riding a few days later.

During the winter months, I toned it down. I did more road riding including riding a marathon, 26.2 miles, with my sister over break. Once it gets warmer, I hope to continue riding once again.

Even though the pandemic was bad for everyone, especially those who lost family members, there were many benefits. For one, my dad, who normally commutes two hours each way to go to work, had more time to spend with me and my siblings. I also got hooked on biking which will be a hobby that will last for a long time, hopefully longer than this pandemic lasts.



Stuff To Do

Bored at home? It happens to most of us. Here are some ideas to keep you busy!

by Rachel Ng

- Customize your iPad to your fullest liking. Wallpapers, Widgets, organized apps, everything you can think of!
- Draw or write a story. Let your imagination run wild!
- Study for School (you know I had to add that)
- Organize your desk.
- Get some physical activity out of your day. Go on a walk, do some workouts or yoga.
- Play with your pet
- Make something creative
- Decorate your room or office

- Make a sign on your window to encourage others
- Do some mindfulness practices
- Listen to your favorite music
- Cook or bake something for your family
- Donate some old stuff you don't use anymore
- Watch a good movie
- Binge your favorite series
- Find a good book. South Middle has a great wide selection of books!
- Have a zoom/google meet with friends

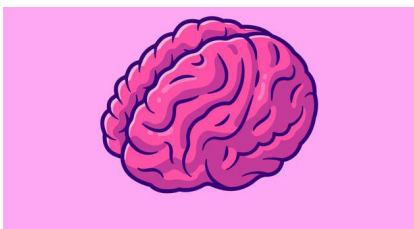
I hoped some of these things helped. Even though we are socially distant and wearing masks, we can still make the best of our time!

Card Tricks

by Olivia Zhen

Ever wanted to impress your friends with card tricks? Here are a few basic card tricks to try! Remember that some of these tricks cannot be repeated more than once, otherwise it will be too obvious of how you did it.

Mind Reading

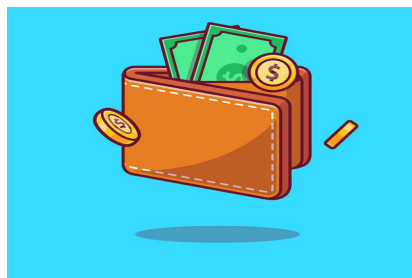


You will need:

- A deck of cards

Directions:

Have your audience shuffle the deck if they want. Sneak a glance at the bottom card and memorize it (don't let your audience see you doing it), this will be the key to your trick. Have a volunteer pick any card in the deck. Don't look at it yourself but show it to the audience and tell them to memorize it. Then have them place the card on top of the deck. Cut the deck wherever you want, this means to bring the top half of the deck and place it underneath the other half. Now flip through the deck and look for the card you memorized earlier. If you did this trick properly then the card they chose should be to the right of the card you memorized. Show their card to the audience and they will be amazed!



Wallet Prediction

You will need:

- A deck of cards
- An envelope, wallet, or the deck of cards box
- Post-it
- Writing tool

Directions:

Before the trick, take out any card in the deck and make the prediction of that card onto your post-it. Ex. If you chose the 3 of spades write, "3 of spades" onto your post-it. Next place your prediction inside your envelope, wallet or the cards box. Then place your card underneath the envelope, wallet or the cards box. Place this behind you and don't let your audience see that the card is there. Now call in your audience, have a volunteer come up and let them deal the rest of the deck, onto the table until whenever they want. IMPORTANT: Make sure they deal it in a messy pile on the table, you can say something like, "Don't worry about the neatness, it doesn't really matter." (Although it does) When they choose to stop, say, "I made a prediction of which card you will stop at." Now pull out your envelope, wallet or the cards box. (Make sure they don't see the card underneath.) Place your envelope, wallet or the cards box onto the pile of cards, with the secret card underneath. Then have the audience member pick up the envelope, wallet or the cards box and have them read the prediction inside. Lift up the top card of the pile on the table, and show it is the card you predicted!

Book Reviews

Fantastical Books for Readers

by Sarah Sun

Reading is magic. A book is a balm for stress, a sleek boat through the choppy waters of life. It's a place where you are finally not just focusing on yourself, "me myself and I" the center of our lives, but rather the adventures of another, indulging in fantasies thought up by another human mind where the sky's the limit. And these words aside, quarantine has surely freed up some additional reading time, and if you're lost without a book to read, that's what these book reviews are for. In this article, I wish to recommend two books.

We begin with *Carry On* by Rainbow Rowell (yes, that's her real name!). She herself is quite a formidable author, with her debut novel *Attachments* published in 2011, another one or more books published every single year following her first. *Carry On* itself has a relation to Harry Potter, a well-known and well-loved series, beginning as Harry Potter fanfiction. The novel follows the adventures of Simon Snow, in a world where mages are magic wielders, their spells coming from the words that the non-magical civilians speak, Simon being one of the most powerful mage at a young age- his power rich, yet uncontrollable. The blurb begins with "Simon Snow is the worst Chosen One who's ever been chosen." In these fantasy worlds, there must be a villain, and this one happens to be "a magic-eating monster running around, wearing Simon's face." But Rowell never fails to surprise... just wait until the end.

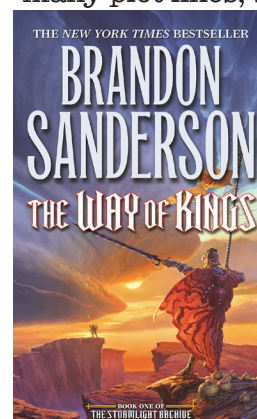
The second book I would like to recommend is *Storm Siren* by Mary Weber. While not as well-known in the genre of fantasy, this first book of a trilogy is still quite potent, with an idea surprisingly original when considering an aspect frequently met in imaginary realms: the elements. As stated in the blurb, "Set in a beautifully eclectic world of suspicion, super abilities, and monsters, *Storm Siren* is a story of power. And whoever controls that power will win."

The protagonist, Nym, wields much of that power, with her command over the elements of the sky. She is a slave and an orphan of a kingdom stuck in a weary war, and when she becomes fostered by a court advisor, "Nym is unleashed into a world of politics, bizarre parties, and rumors of an evil more sinister than she's being prepared to fight." Her Elemental kind is rare, and typically killed at birth, which makes her an invaluable asset. As a result, she is at the center of hands reaching to claim her power, and there is only so much a teenager can do. A beautifully woven story of plot twists and characters, the storm doesn't cease... until the war is won. By which side, and in what way? That remains to be read. All in all, well... stay book-loving and magical, everyone!

The Way of Kings: A Book Review

by Chloe Ning

The Way of Kings kicks off with the death of an important king, which starts a flurry of events that we dive into, six years after the assassination. There are so many plot lines, but our main



characters consist of Shallan, a well-born girl who chases down a heretic princess in an attempt to steal one of her prized possessions;

Kaladin, a spearman who believes himself cursed to lose everyone he tries to protect; and Dalinar, the brother of the murdered king, whose allies turn on him as his thirst for battle wanes and begins seeing visions that he believes are warnings. I really enjoyed this book because the world is really amazing and obsession-worthy, as are the characters, which all makes it a book that I highly recommend.

The COVID Vaccine

The COVID-19 Vaccine Is Here! How Does It Work?

by Damian Balkcom

The COVID-19 vaccine, an injection to create immunity to the virus, is giving the world hope that things will get better this year. After a devastating year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can finally start to see the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel.

Pharmaceutical companies raced to develop the vaccine, received government approval, and cranked out the production of vaccines. Hundreds of millions of Americans now wait their turn and scramble to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>) which tracks COVID-19 globally and is very reliable shows that so far over 100 million people have been infected with COVID-19, and over 2.15 million people have died. In the U.S., as of the time of writing this article (January 27, 2021), over 25.5 million people have been infected and over 426,000 people have died. The numbers continue to rise everyday. Even in our Great Neck and North New Hyde Park neighborhoods, we have seen hundreds of infected people and many deaths. Every day, we get notifications from the school district about more students and staff infected by the coronavirus.

To make matters worse, there are mutations that have created different variants of the coronavirus that are even more contagious than before, kind of like a COVID-19 2.0 which is unfortunately faster and more powerful. The race is on to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and vaccinate everyone before these new variants spread everywhere.

There are many people who are afraid of the COVID-19 vaccine. This particular vaccine worries people because they have either been getting wrong or false information. Some people wrongly believe that the vaccine will give someone COVID-19. On their "Vaccine Facts" page, the Cen-

ter for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explains that the current and authorized COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. will NOT make anyone sick because they do not contain the live coronavirus. Any side effects or symptoms from the vaccine are just the body's immune response to the vaccine. In rare cases, there are allergic reactions to the vaccine as there are to any vaccine or medication. Unless you have allergies to the vaccine's ingredients, you should not worry about the vaccine.

Some people also worry that the vaccine was developed too quickly and was fast tracked so there are too many unknowns and possible problems. According to the article "The lightning-fast quest for COVID vaccines – and what it means for other diseases" published in *Nature Journal*, a global science and technology research journal, "the world was able to develop COVID-19 vaccines so quickly because of years of previous research on related viruses and faster ways to manufacture vaccines, enormous funding that allowed firms to run multiple trials in parallel, and regulators moving more quickly than normal." So this vaccine was not developed in less than a year. It had a headstart with years of scientific research already done on similar viruses.

It's just a matter of time when everyone who wants to get vaccinated will be. Hopefully children like us will be able to receive the vaccine soon. While we wait, let's learn about how vaccines work.

There are many kinds of vaccines. Some vaccines, like the ones for smallpox, chicken pox, and measles, use live viruses or bacterias called pathogens that are weakened. Other vaccines use inactive or parts of the pathogen like vaccines for shingles, hepatitis B, and tetanus. When the weakened or inactive pathogen or part of the pathogen is injected into the body, the body will produce an immune response by learning and recognizing the antigens of the pathogen. The body's immune system will send T- and B-lymphocytes, which are white blood cells, to attack the cells that are infected with the pathogen and remember it. The body will produce antibodies to fight the antigens of

the pathogen. (<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/320987>) Next time the pathogen comes around, the body will recognize it and fight off the pathogen which doesn't stand a chance, and the person won't get sick. It is like learning all the tricks of a bad guy so you can beat him, never forgetting anything about him, and attacking him at the first sign of his return.

However, the current COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. work differently. Both the COVID-19 vaccines that are made by companies Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna are both mRNA vaccines. mRNA stands for "messenger ribonucleic acid" or "messenger RNA." mRNA is a molecule that carries the genetic information that is copied from the DNA. It is like an instruction manual for the body to build amino acids into proteins of the pathogen. The body then sends T- and B-lymphocytes to attack and remember the pathogen's protein. (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/why-are-mrna-vaccines-so-exciting-2020121021599>)

These vaccines are exciting and historic. While mRNA vaccines have been researched and studied for many diseases, this is the first time that they have been approved for use to treat diseases. After almost a year of restricted activities and not being able to be with our families and friends, and after so much sadness and devastation because of loss of life, jobs, and health, I encourage everyone to get the vaccine if you can. Those of us who can't or don't receive the vaccine will need to rely on herd immunity or community immunity by having everyone else around them being vaccinated.

Since the COVID-19 vaccine is only available to people who are 16-years old and older, all of us Great Neck South Middle Schoolers, need the protection of everyone older getting the vaccine. Hopefully, we can get the vaccine one day soon. I can't wait until COVID-19 and the coronavirus are wiped out. Personally, I can't wait to see my friends, grandparents, and cousins again. I hope to be able to go to Cooperstown, NY, this summer and compete in a huge baseball tournament against 105 other teams.

How Do COVID-19 Vaccines Work?

by Erin Wong

Starting in the middle of December, COVID-19 vaccines have slowly begun to roll out. We know vaccines lower the risk of getting infected but how?

A brief overview of how the immune system works:

To understand how COVID vaccines work, we have to know how our bodies fight against illness. The number one goal of viruses, once they enter our bodies, is to attack and multiply. I'm sure everyone has heard about the immune system, the body's response against foreign invaders. Our bodies employ several different ways to fight viruses. However, the most common is through white blood cells, our body's armed forces. First, macrophages consume and digest viruses in dead or dying cells, leaving antigens behind. The body can then identify antigens as harmful, and produces antibodies to eradicate them. B-lymphocytes and T-lymphocytes are our defense cells. B-lymphocytes make antibodies that attack the remaining parts of the virus, while T-lymphocytes attack the infected cells.

How do the vaccines work?

When a person gets COVID-19 for the first time, they use all their fighting mechanisms to get over the infection. Using T-lymphocytes (memory cells), his/her body remembers how to protect itself against COVID once more if it ever encounters it again. COVID-19 vaccines help our body develop that memory without having to encounter it first. Because building immunity inevitably causes us to come into contact with parts of the coronavirus, it is common to have symptoms after vaccination.

Companies & Vaccine Types:

Right now, two companies have authorized widespread vaccines; Moderna and BioTech Pfizer. Both companies use a type of vaccine using the virus' messenger RNA which Damien explains in his article. Although we have vaccines now, it is still important to follow the guidelines of the 3W's: Wear a mask, wash your hands, and keep your distance! Stay safe everyone!

History Flashback: A Trip to the Pandemic of 1918

by Chloe Lee

Even before Covid-19, there was an event very similar in our history. It was the Flu of 1918. This deadly flu virus also caused a pandemic and lockdown of schools. What can we learn from this strange year like ours? Sit tight and let's make our way back in history. You may start to think that this flu is no different from the one we commonly have each year. Was the lack of modern technology the reason it became such a disaster? No, this flu was not any ordinary flu virus. It is known as the Spanish Flu although it is uncertain where it came from. The only reason why the name stuck was because during this time, many countries were at war in World War I which meant that there were restrictions

on press. Spain, not being involved in the fight, was one of the only countries who reported on the virus. Afterward, people started calling the flu "The Spanish Flu." At first, experts prepared and warned little because the virus was no different from the common flu or seasonal flu. However, the Spanish flu became stronger quickly. Soon, it became a global pandemic just like today. Around 50 million people around the world died.

During this flu pandemic, there were many similar precautions people took as we do today. For one, everyone had to wear a face covering. People also practiced social distancing and closed schools. During this time, hospitals were overwhelmed with patients like some today. One thing that has changed, however, is the

technology we now have available. Since we can use computers and the internet, people are still able to meet virtually. Schools can also switch over to remote learning. In 1918, these options were not available. People couldn't meet whenever they wanted on Zoom or text one another constantly. The lack of modern technology made it harder to socialize compared to today. I guess that can be one thing we are grateful for in these tough times.

You might have heard people say, "As we sail through uncharted waters" during the pandemic. Well, we have charted similar waters. Historians say, we can expect life to get back to normal eventually looking back at the 1918 pandemic. Laura Spinney, the author of "Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu

of 1918" says, "The evidence suggests that societies do bounce back quite quickly from pandemics, even from the 1918 flu. The trouble is that at the individual level, the price paid was huge amounts of misery and suffering." This once in a century deadly virus has caused so much loss. However, if our ancestors can overcome their pandemic, surely we can, too.

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School Breaks

by Xiao Ma

We can all agree that the last two months of the year, starting from Halloween or so, is pretty much smooth sailing. November 2020, for example, brought us, on average, a whole day off each week. And everyone knows what December is like.

But the thing about the holidays is that eventually, it all comes to an end, and the next thing you know, you're back in class, and the next day off is three weeks away. So, how long can school breaks last? Is there a standard for when kids can have these breaks? How were breaks even introduced?

Well, let's start off with the most reliable breaks: the weekend. There's no real single origin for why there are weekend breaks, but a few writers on Quora and the website Wonderopolis point to the effect of religion - something to the effects of "God created the world in seven

days, and on the seventh he rested - , labor unions, and Henry Ford, the driving force behind the 40-hour work week, and one of the first employers to give employees weekends off respectively.

The deal with winter, spring, and summer breaks really sums up to a basis of state regulations. Theoretically, the idea of breaks really comes from the days left in the year after you've subtracted the mandatory academic (school) year and the weekends. So, if some place in the U.S. requires 300 days of school per year, you as a student there won't have any breaks, and might have to give up some weekends to go to school!

Luckily, the academic year isn't that long in America. According to ecs.org, 31 states plus the District of Columbia require 180-day academic years, while 14 states have "parameters around school start and/or finish dates," which basically

means that the state cares about when school starts and ends.

Now at this point, you may be wondering why the academic year is 180 days, more or less. For that, you'll have to thank rich people. The 180-day academic year, according to Mental Floss, comes from a period of time when richer families would have their kids skip school during the summer, which caused discrepancies in the performance of children. School wasn't mandatory back then, so eventually, with the 40-hour work week and the importance of leisure time on the rise, legislators decided to argue in the favor of summer breaks, eventually cutting down the academic year by over 25%, to around 180 days.

That's right: back in the old days, cities like Detroit had 260-day academic years! Considering that there are 104 days of the weekend in the year, students back in

the mid 1800's really didn't have breaks!

At this point, we've covered the origins of all types of breaks. But there's one last category we haven't covered yet -- single-day breaks.

The deal with these breaks is simple. Most of the time, they're federal holidays, but they can also be individual state breaks. The days states recognize as holidays are different depending on where you live, but there are 10 federal holidays, and due to the high cost of holidays for the government, that's most likely not going to change soon.

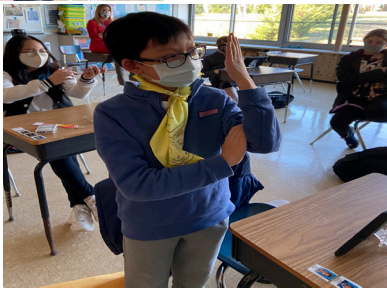
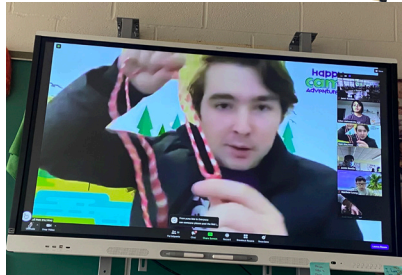
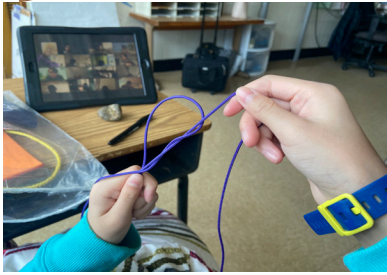
As it turns out, states have a lot more leverage in holidays than you think, and the history of breaks goes back a long, long time. And there you have it. A brief briefing on the state of breaks in the U.S.



Happy Camper



On January 5th and 6th, the 6th graders enjoyed Happy Camper!



Scholastic Winners

Congratulations to the following South Middle student writers who participated in the 2021 Scholastic Art & Writing Contests and won awards for their work!

Megan C. Chan:

Silver Key, short story

Isabella Ng:

Gold Key, flash fiction

Silver Key, poetry

Honorable Mention, poetry

Sarah Sun:

Gold Key, poetry

2 Silver Keys for short story and memoir

Jason Zhang:

Honorable mention, humor

Laura Zhang:

Honorable mention, poetry

Friday in the Front

December 11

"LIVE! Clarinet Studies"

with Olivia

Special Performance, December 16

"Beethoven's 250th Birthday"

with members of Band and Orchestra

Special Performance, December 16 -

"Tis the Season: A Holiday Medley"

with members of the Chorus

December 18

"Let It Snow!"

with Chris and James

January 8, 2021

"Who Could Ask for Anything More?"

with Katherine

January 15

"Blindfolded Pianist Challenge!"

with Allen

PPE Supplies

On January 19 and 20, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders came to the library during their lunch periods to give back to their school community.

During these lunch sessions, students assembled PPE kits that will be distributed to each classroom.

Students also used this time to help the FACS department assemble kits for the 6th and 7th grade remote students for the second semester.



**South Middle
SADD thanks all
those who
participated in
the Hot Cocoa
Drive!**

SOUTH MIDDLE AND SADD
THANK YOU ALL FOR THE
DONATIONS



Why Productivity Equals a Better Future

by Sarah Sun

The pandemic has brought us plenty of things. It has catalyzed catastrophic death tolls, putting many countries on alert and the population on their toes. It has directly affected our own lives—daily habits changing to mold the life of social distancing, our education systems bending to encompass safe learning. At the end of last school year, safety measures prompted remote learning, which led to one positive amidst the worldwide turbulence: time.

I asked around for what productive work people have been doing in their extra time, and the answers I received included practicing instruments, studying science (e.g. anatomy and physiology, quite an important skill in life, actually),

and even enhancing physical skills, such as flexibility.

You could think of it like a tree, your basic knowledge building the trunk, and as you learn more, the tree branches out, growing and growing. Have you ever heard the quote by Albert Einstein: “The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don’t know.” As the tree branches out, you will be able to touch more knowledge, the circumference of possibility wider and more broad. And should you try to learn more now, your future will hold a wider range of opportunities. Of course, the choice is still your own, and will be respected, no matter which path you choose.

It is true that some people can make learning fun for you, but true motivation comes from making it fun for

yourself. Society has simply defined “learning” as something mundane, yet important. Instead of wondering about the “fun” things you could be doing, think of learning as something “fun.” Because it is and can be. Not to mention, in accordance with one of my mom’s intuitive views on education, if you spend your relaxation time worrying about your studies, and your studying time thinking about relaxation, both the studying and relaxing are not used efficiently to the fullest.

All in all, just take a bit of time to think about how important school is, and the major effects just a bit of time management can render. Do you remember what you were doing back in winter break? Did the non-school weeks fly by in a haze of video games or Youtube, or were you produc-

tively utilizing your time? The 24 hours in a day is for you to use, and it is up to you and your responsibility to determine what for. Because, in the end, where you end up 20 years from now rests on your shoulders and your abilities. How high the pedestal on which we stand in life is not raised by others, but yourself. The life skill that this pandemic may be able to teach us? It all boils down to “in what way can you best raise your pedestal yourself.” I sincerely believe everyone has the capability to reach the sky, and it all begins with the decisions you make now.

2021 Toyota Mirai Takes on Hydrogen

by Jonathan Jia

The 2021 Toyota Mirai is one of the only cars on the market to run on hydrogen, excluding a few additional cars manufactured by other companies. The car’s electric motor is powered by electricity, which is generated from water that is created from a chemical reaction that occurs when hydrogen and oxygen are combined. Water vapor is essentially the only type of gas that is emitted through its pipeline. However, a button in the car allows water to flow through the tailpipe instead. To fill up the car, hydrogen has to be inserted through a nozzle, which only takes about a few minutes.

Despite its exceptional method of running on hydrogen, the 2021 Toyota Mirai also offers a wide range of high-tech features as well as a stunning appearance. Some of the features include “heated and ventilated front and rear seats (a rare feature), a “bird’s eyes view camera with perimeter scan”, a “smart key system”, and many more amazing features.

All these options are not the only component

that makes the 2021 Toyota Mirai a refined version of the 2020 Toyota Mirai. The 2021 Toyota Mirai remarkably presents itself, containing an extended body as well as many modern designs. The amount of elegance that pertains to the exterior and interior designs of the car is just tremendous.

Unfortunately, the car is only sold in California. The reason for this is the lack of hydrogen stations across the United States. Due to the lack of stations, Toyota is planning to build a hydrogen station in California. Toyota is also offering \$15,000 worth of hydrogen to anyone who buys the 2021 Toyota Mirai.

The Japanese word “Mirai” means future, indicating that the 2021 Toyota Mirai is taking on a different approach towards the automotive industry. Toyota still plans to further develop the Toyota Mirai throughout the future years, meaning that there will be a wait until a sufficient model of the Toyota Mirai is developed. Right now, the MSRP for the XLE version of the 2021 Toyota Mirai is \$49,500, while the MSRP for

the limited version is \$66,000. Hydrogen powered-cars may one day become the new normal.



This is the revamped interior of the new 2021 Toyota.



This is an exterior view of the 2021 Toyota Mirai.

Choosing Your Toothpaste

by Chloe Lee

Toothpaste is used in our everyday lives so it's important to use the one that is right for you. The flavor of toothpaste is one of the ways most people tend to choose between different types but it is not the wisest option to begin with. Try to figure out what your teeth will like and if you can, look for a flavor that you prefer second. While toothbrushes are important, if you use the wrong toothpaste, your teeth will not be as healthy as they can be!

Recently, salt toothpaste has become popular with many people. The idea behind putting salt in toothpaste is because salt helps

sanitize and is used when someone gets an infection. Dentists prescribe daily salt water rinses to people sometimes if they get a sore. Salt toothpaste does the same thing! If you can't find salt toothpaste or are not quite sold on it,, you can still use the salt water rinsing. First, in a cup, pour clean water. Add in salt (not mixed with anything else) and dissolve by mixing with a spoon.

Another popular toothpaste contains charcoal. However, charcoal toothpastes do not have the same charcoal you would see in grills or in fireplaces. Actually, it's a special type of charcoal known as activated charcoal. Activated charcoal is put in a very

special gas causing it to have holes or large spaces. These spaces allow the charcoal to soak up many substances and this made people think that the charcoal would soak up teeth stains as well. However, it is still unclear whether the toothpaste is effective or not. The *Journal of the American Dental Association* says that more studies must be done to determine the efficacy and safety of charcoal toothpaste.

Now you have the information on some of the toothpastes people use and what it does to help your teeth. To get a better idea of which type of toothpaste works best for your teeth, talk to your dentist at your

next appointment. Teeth are so important in our lives. They help us chew, tear, and cut our food. So give thanks to your teeth by choosing the best toothpaste for them!

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Why South Middle Is Such A Great Place To Learn

by Khushi Batada

South Middle School is an amazing place because every member of South Middle School is innovative and helpful. Every teacher makes it fun and easy to learn something new.

Math teachers make easy, fun, and unique methods to learn some new mathematical facts.

English teachers assign amazing books to read and, after reading the book, they create interesting assignments for students to think about the book even more. English teachers even add activities that have students record their voices so teachers know how their language is. They want to see our faces and hear our voices.

Because of the Covid pandemic, we cannot attend actual science labs, but science teachers have

found so many unique apps for experiments. This makes science so much fun and students continue to grow and learn.

Another fun thing in South Middle School is sports. In school, we play so many interesting sports and participate in interesting athletic events. The gym teachers create tournaments after teaching students about a sport.

The SMS social studies teachers are also amazing because history can be tough! It's hard to understand history (especially American history when you were not born in America), but the social studies teachers find amazing cartoons, movies, and lessons to help students better understand the lessons.

And last but not least: technology. In technology, teachers cannot assign to the remote learning students hands-on lessons that

require tools, but teachers do work very hard to find relatable websites and fun stuff for remote students. It is challenging, but they do a great job!

Every student's teachers are amazing and working so hard in this difficult time. They find so many new things for every student. Thank you so much to all of the SMS teachers; you are the best teachers!



Photo credit: www.greatneck.k12.ny.us



Photo credit: www.facebook.com