



# The Virus of Senioritis

*The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the idea of senioritis in the class of '21*

By Shoshanna **Hemley**

Teachers of senior classes are no stranger to students who once had good grades slowly losing focus and motivation. They see high schoolers in their last year often fall victim to the plague of senioritis. This year however is different. There are two viruses seniors are now worried about. Senioritis and COVID-19. By their fourth year, many seniors become burnt out and are eager to graduate. But nothing compares to the spreading of senioritis for the class of 2021, a cohort of students who started, and probably will end, their senior years in a global pandemic.

Motivation is at an all-time low. Many students are stuck at home, isolated and online, staring at their screens for hours a day. With the mix of asynchronous time, lone-

liness, and unhealthy amounts of screen time, it's no wonder so many seniors are finding it hard to keep up with their classes, much less attend their classes from somewhere besides their bed. Their focus is drained, and it's far from their fault. Senioritis is as infectious as the common cold. How can one expect to have immunity when they listen to lectures through a screen? After four hours of zoom, there are another four hours of homework online. Days blur into each other as students go days without seeing each other. Once well-established routines fall apart, and many connections that kept each other motivated in school are now either lost or are briefly re-sparked during moments in zoom breakout rooms.

Online school is more than simply a motivation killer. It's no

secret that online school is a new and difficult endeavor for many. Some are balancing a rigorous, AP filled senior course load completely online. Teachers are continuing with lessons as if they were still in person. Many fail to see that online classes need to be taught differently than in-person classes and that to ignore that creates an inequitable gap between online and hybrid students. Many seniors fall victim to this. Some who were once 4.0 students find themselves struggling to keep up.

Much of senior year fun comes from traditions: homecoming court, the senior paint fight, prom, senior skip day, and other activities are highlights of one's senior year. While students are finding ways to navigate these obstacles and try to continue these traditions, they're nowhere near the same. During

spirit week, there was a PJ day. However, for many seniors doing online school, this is what they wear to school anyway. These traditions are what seniors look forward to and what keeps them motivated for their last year. Now, the only thing to look forward to is for the global pandemic to end.

Whether seniors are online or hybrid, anyone in the class of 2021 can agree that this year is not a good one. There are countless aspects of senior year that have been canceled for this year's seniors such as traditions, extracurricular activities, college visits, and even standardized tests. If students' mental health is at an all-time low, how can seniors be expected to succeed when they're living through what feels like the end of the world? Unfortunately, there is no vaccine against senioritis and there never will be. It'll con-

tinue to infect seniors for generations to come. But at least for the 2020-2021 school year, teachers can help seniors who feel crushed by the weight of school, college applications, and also a never-ending pandemic. We can't continue to go on as if everything is normal. So to treat school like it is normal greatly hurts students of any grade. Teachers are trying, we all know they are. And we're all thankful for the effort they're putting in to serve their students. But 8+ hours a day on a screen is not sustainable for anyone. To expect that from students is unrealistic. So with rising cases of both COVID-19 and senioritis, teachers and administrators alike need to find ways to support their students in a healthy way while understanding the difficulties of being a senior in this time.

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