



## SYML

By: Sarah Finkelstein

Passion, struggle, and simplicity. These are the emotions that motivate singer/songwriter Brian Fennell. Fennell has captured his modest and minimalist music style effortlessly in his alt-indie solo project SYML. Many people may not have heard the name SYML before, but they will most likely recognize his music from tv soundtracks, short-films, and on the radio. SYML translated as “simple” in Welsh, combines meticulous and personal lyrics, effortless melodies, and emotional vocals to produce beautiful and meaningful songs.

In the early 2000s, Fennell gained recognition as lead singer and songwriter for the indie-pop group Barcelona. After being discovered on MySpace, Fennell and his bandmates signed to Universal Motown and released several hits before going on hiatus a few years ago. Since then Fennell has been dedicated to writing and producing music as SYML.

He composed and recorded his music in his basement with no idea how his life would change spontaneously after releasing one song. SYML’s song “Where’s My Love” was featured in a 30-second promo for the MTV Tv show “Teen Wolf” back in 2016. Fans of the TV show obsessed over the song trying to find it on streaming platforms. Before SYML understood what was occurring, “Where’s My Love” was an internet sensation. Since its release, the music video for “Where’s My Love” has been viewed more than 51 million times and streamed almost 90 million times on Spotify.

In 2019, SYML released his self-titled album. SYML hit number 5 on the Billboard Heatseekers Chart. SYML’s album contains older hits plus a few new songs with his familiar, carefree style. The music on the album stays faithful to the soft quality of his previously released singles and EPs. His voice contains a quality that is deeply haunting and lyrics that are incredibly vulnerable. That makes his album one worth listening to.

Not only are the songs all engaging and move the listener through a rollercoaster of emotions, but each song also signifies the complexity of SYML’s heartfelt lyrics and his passion to tell a story. The album opens with the upbeat “Clean Eyes” and continues to transition from bright songs like “Animal” to more somber songs such as “Wildfire” and “The Bird.”

Personally, my favorite song is “Girl.” This song is an extraordinary ballad dedicated to Brian’s daughter. “Girl” is a candid and passionate piece that shares his hopes for this daughter’s life as she grows up. Throughout the song, SYML showcases his outstanding vocal range and the use of melodies to compliment his voice perfectly.

Not only does SYML release songs and EPs frequently, but he also releases alternative versions of a majority of his music. Songs like “Where’s My Love” and “Wildfire” have acoustic versions that add a different, softer vibe to the songs. He also has songs like “Symmetry” which was released as a piano instrumental, and a “dark” version. These alternative versions show the versatility of the lyrics and how SYML is able to transform his lyrics’ meaning with a simple change in the compositions.

With rich lyrics and flawless vocals, SYML is an artist to look out for in the future. SYML has sold-out international tours and often collaborates with new artists. He is a talented musician who is not afraid to adapt to different interpretations of his lyrics and gives his songs new meaning. SYML is known for his message of simplistic beauty and uses his music to spread positivity and honesty.



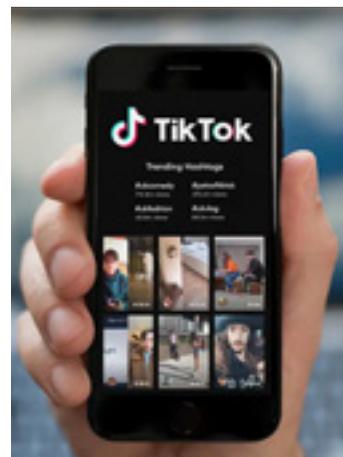
Visit us at [westbullseye.com](http://westbullseye.com) for more articles.



Follow us on Twitter: @WESTBullsEye

## TikTok

By: Eve Goldman



If you haven’t heard of TikTok, then you haven’t been listening. The 30-second video-sharing social networking app had the biggest month ever with 75 million new users in December. Despite its rapid increase in usage many people—often older adults who aren’t even sure what Tik Tok is. The app consists of 30 to 60-second videos, which could be a variety of things, cute puppies, a fashion icon, or maybe just your average teen dancing to their favorite song. Tik Tok is often referred to as a lip-syncing app, a sort of karaoke through a screen. Personally, I feel a closer comparison would be Vine, considering most of the videos are comedy, whether it’s a skit, or prank, or just a goofy video. Users today are engaged in the culture wars on Twitter, hateful, exploitive, dangerous, and otherwise questionable content that freaks out advertisers.

They might give themselves silly, but self-affirming makeovers where, afterward, they cite themselves not as “cute” but rather “drop dead. Gorgeous.” But is this just one of the hidden dangers of the app? Some more recent trends, that have probably come to light out of pure boredom, with

quarantine and not being able to go out and socialize, but this does not necessarily justify them. For example, The penny challenge, which involves dropping a penny between a phone charger and the wall plug, has been blamed for starting fires. Then there’s the skull breaker challenge, which involves tripping somebody so that they fall and smack their head on the ground, possibly causing serious injuries. Another issue that arose with TikTok is the video the app is taking down, and deeming “inappropriate” or “violating community guidelines”. This issue surfaced when Feroza Aziz, a 17-year-old girl from New Jersey, posted a political video disguised as a makeup tutorial, Tik Tok removed the video and after Feroza reached out to her followers to alert them to the injustice, which caused an outbreak when the video was suspiciously restored. This wasn’t the last time TikTok was accused of censoring videos. Most recently they have been removing videos of creators with disabilities, creators that are members of the LGBTQ community, as well as creators who just simply don’t fit today’s society of a beauty standard. This brings me to the next topic of discussion regarding TikTok.

Users of this popular app are more than likely familiar with what I’m talking about. For example (for those who don’t know) the app has a section referred to as the “For You” page that consists of videos related to ones the viewer has liked or saved in the past. So imagine this you’re scrolling along, and you would see videos of these impossibly beautiful people. What does that mean, you may ask? Well it’s quite simple in today’s society that as a girl you are expected to have the perfect body, skinny, but not too skinny, and stretch marks are gross, perfect hair, but not fake, and to cover your blemishes but don’t wear too much makeup, because then you’re a catfish. For a guy you’re expected to have muscle, but not too fat, and to be masculine in every way, except body hair, that’s disgusting. These standards that were created are simply impossible to meet. But those few who have worked for their looks, or the universe has simply blessed, have earned the right to show off what they have accomplished. Whether it’s in a bikini dancing to your favorite song or flexing in a workout video. But these videos not only make some viewers self-conscious, and doubt their worth, but are allowed to be posted when a plus-size model who is working just as hard as others have their video taken down. Or a man doing makeup has his videos taken down, but a woman is more than welcome to post as many makeup tutorials as she wants. I will say that TikTok has definitely made some effort to fix these issues, but they are nowhere near fully resolved yet.

## Table of Contents:

Reviews.....	1
Life in Lockdown.....	2, 3
Pandemic Reflection.....	4,5
Senior Destinations.....	6, 7
Reviews.....	8, 9
Editorials.....	10, 11

## Staff:

Editor in Chief: Sarah Finkelstein

Contributors:

Kyana Cruz  
Kathleen Alexander  
Eve Goldman  
Anna P  
Chase Carucci  
Tj Pilewski

Julia Setteducati  
Riley Hovsepian  
Sarah Finkelstein  
Ariana Tredger  
Trevor Ellick  
Jaime Yoos

Advisor: Mr. Evan Klauber

## Life in Lockdown

# Numbers That Show how Corona has Changed Our Lives

By: Smithtown Bullseye Team

Kathleen Alexander

In a matter of a few months, Covid-19 became one of the worst pandemics our world has ever seen. People are becoming infected in large numbers every day and unfortunately, most people don't win their battle against this virus. However, the people infected with the disease aren't the only ones impacted by the virus. Whether you have lost a loved one, or find yourself struggling to make ends meet now that you can't work, or you had an event canceled that you were really looking forward to, Covid-19 has impacted all of our lives. Since the virus started spreading, no one has been able to live their normal life of going to school/work, seeing family and friends, or even just leaving the house to run errands. I've noticed big changes in my daily life since the quarantine and it's really put the severity of this pandemic into perspective for me.

- I drink seven cups of tea each week in order to relieve stress.
- I spend approximately five hours per day hanging out with my family, which is more than before the virus spread.
- I spend three hours a day on school work as opposed to the seven-hour school day I used to have.
- I spend approximately three hours a day on my phone due to increased boredom.
- I changed my outfit approximately three times each week due to increased laziness.
- I spend one hour each day going outside to exercise each day to stay in shape.
- I lost one family member during this time and wasn't able to say goodbye properly.

This time is difficult for all of us now since we're not able to go about our normal schedules and routines.

Whether you have been personally affected by the virus or not, this is a problem that we all must face. But we can't do it alone. As human beings, we all must learn to adapt to this change and continue to live our lives despite the circumstances. We must learn to alter our lifestyles in order to stay healthy while continuing to be productive during this time. Because while staying safe and healthy is most important at this time, we also need to continue with our lives as best we can so that we can transition back to normal once the virus stops spreading. Even though we're all confined in our homes, life goes on and we need to make the best of it by staying productive, staying active, and taking the precautions that are necessary in order to stop the spread of Covid-19.

**“We all must learn to adapt to this change and continue to live our lives despite the circumstances.”**

Chase Carucci

During this quarantine, I feel as if I have a completely different life now from my lifestyle to my relationships with friends and family, and the way I handle my school work.

- Number of New Movies Watched: 2

Last week, I decided to watch two new movies, two nights in a row. I watched The Shawshank Redemption and Inception. Both movies were incredible, as they are considered to be some of the greatest movies ever. I really enjoyed both of them and will probably watch them for a second time soon.

- Number of Pool Games Played with my Brothers and Dad: 25+

Before the quarantine, my family and I rarely used our pool table, however over the last few weeks we've developed some serious competitive nature amongst ourselves. The games keep getting better and better.

- Number of New Television Shows Binged: 1

My brother and I decided to binge-watch The Mandalorian together as we both love Star Wars. I gave its rating an 8/10 as I expected more from it based on reviews, but I was still pleased.



- Number of Drives Taken: 6

I frequently go for drives around town to get out of the house a little bit. I drive by Smithtown West every time I go for a ride in hopes we go back soon. I usually circle back home and then go to the other side of town from where I live. After a while of listening to music and wasting some gas, I finally go home.

- Number of New Songs Learned on Guitar: 3

Most do not know I have a passion for music and playing my guitar. With not much to do, I have been trying to learn a few new songs here and there. I have learned "The Rain Song" by Led Zeppelin, "Best Part" by Daniel Caesar, and "Going to California" also by Led Zeppelin. Sadly, two weeks ago my learning was stopped due to the breaking of my high E string. I have not gotten around to ordering a new set of strings. but maybe I will tonight?



**“Neighborhood kids playing Xbox alone instead of hooping in the front yard. Mandatory quarantine has made life more challenging.”**

Trevor Ellick

My life has never looked so unlike itself.

Deserted streets and vacant basketball hoops.

Neighborhood kids playing Xbox alone instead of hooping in the front yard. Mandatory quarantine has made life more challenging.

But outside of the changes, we can see right away there are other lifestyle shifts that reflect the changes in my life that have emerged within the last month.

My friend's list on Xbox, of course, is up, and the numbers are staggering. With the state's shutdown extended until at least May 15, it is a desperate attempt for my friends to keep busy and an escape from going insane.

But some of the data shows hope for my senior year. While hundreds of schools were forced to close, the rate of me getting closer with old friends through Xbox has skyrocketed. My anxiety about missing old buddies and potential regret is down. While Also my newly reinvigorated friendships have skyrocketed in rate.

34 People- Increase in my Xbox online friends

During the week of March 22, nearly 51 people were online at once. That constituted a 34 person increase since quarantine began And there are still many people who have yet to be engulfed into the newly found Xbox lifestyle.

12- Increase in bottles collected out of my rooms trash can

March data from my dad shows that every Sunday when he collects the bottles from my room the bag feels heavier and he determined I was using 12 more bottles whether Gatorade or water per week. The increase is most likely a reflection of my increased time in my room and thus an increase in consumption of fluids in my room as opposed to downstairs.



The rest of the house saw a great change with all bedrooms including my brother and sisters increasing at around the same rate of bottles while the kitchen bottles decreased due to more time spent in the room.

A million (according to my dad)- Number of dishes in the sink per day

Dishes in the sink have surged in the kitchen, as all of us find ourselves eating in the kitchen most of the day due to our inability to eat elsewhere.

My dad assumes he cleans more than 100x more dishes per day than usual because of this inability to eat elsewhere or do anything but eat.

In comparison, when in normalcy my dad cleaned the dishes once a day now he says he does it 3-5 times which I am not buying.

"It was more dishes than I'd ever seen in my life they piled up like they were the Himalayan mountains," said Steve Ellick who founded the Ellick Family

10-Increase in hours on our electronics

The increase began as schools started closing, then accelerated through the rest of March.

By the end of the month, our electronics use was up by more than 10 hours, according to Steven Ellick of the Ellick Household, the agency responsible for managing the kids' electronic use. The change was most pronounced on daily nights when usage would normally spike as people started their days sleeping till 2 pm. With us staying up till 3 am, it appeared that many were awakening later than usual.

100x Increase in complaints about being too loud on the Xbox at night

My dad's patience with noisy children has run thin, particularly when it comes to blaring voices at 3 am, which prompted a 100 complaint increase by my dad and sister in the month of March.

Complaints of loud talking at 1-3 am increased rapidly since quarantine.



## Life in Lockdown

Ariana Tredger

3 More Hours of Sleep

From being in quarantine I have gotten more hours of sleep. I find myself going to sleep around 1 am and waking up at 11 am. Before quarantine on a school schedule, I would go to sleep at 11 pm and wake up at 6 am. I am getting more sleep but I am going to sleep later, which is causing me to wake up later than usual.



I usually go on my phone and watch Netflix until I go to sleep. I am normally the type of person to go to sleep early but since quarantine, I have been more awake late at night from gaining those hours of sleep.

90%

I Have seen 90% less of my friends and family

I have seen fewer people because of the quarantine. The only people I have seen are the family I live with and some of my friends for a driveby birthday. I have face timed with my aunt, grandma, and cousins. I find myself facetimeing more people then I have before quarantine and talking for a while.

4: I have been to four places

The only places I have been to are my mom's house, my dad's house, the beach, and walks around my neighborhood. If I wasn't in quarantine I would probably be going to my friend's houses, out to eat, school, work, shopping, etc.

75%

I have done less laundry

Since I am not going out and wearing clothes I would wear to school or out with friends I am doing less laundry.

75%

I am eating 75% more often being home

I have found myself eating more food than I would on a regular day at school or going out. I eat more often when I am bored rather than when I am hungry. I am also baking and cooking new things. I have made banana bread and fettuccine alfredo.

Jaime Yoos

Number of FaceTime calls with my friends each day: 6

I love talking to my friends, no matter if were playing games, doing homework, just talking, or even goofing around, my friends give me so much comfort during times like these. They are all so loyal and help me if I'm stressed or having a hard time with something.



Number of times I leave my bedroom per day: 16

I only leave my room when it is necessary; to get food and water, to help my sister and parents and my pets, to go to the bathroom, and a few other times. I get food and water about five times a day, I help take care of my sister's chameleon about twice a day, I have to feed my dog's dinner, and I have to help take care of my parents because both of them are sick and I have to do more things around the house.

Number of new hobbies I have picked up: 3

Over this quarantine, I have picked up on audio mixing, a little bit of coloring/bracelet making, and art with diamonds.

Number of times I have been told to put a mask on: 50

If I need to leave the house for anything, I am told to wear a mask. Also, if I want to talk to my parents face-to-face, then I need to wear a mask because I don't want to get the coronavirus.

Number of times I've been outside: 10

I try to get some fresh air every once in a while, I went to get food a couple of times, and I went to a birthday drive-by. For food, I went to Ralph's and the grocery store. My cousin's birthday just passed and my sister and I drove by his house with a big sign and a gift. Also, I sometimes just go for a walk or walk my dog.



Sarah Finkelstein

Although this may seem extremely unhealthy and alarming, I use my phone for everything: doing homework, drawing, reading, music, watching youtube

Before the quarantine, my average phone screen time was about 4 hours. Without school or any extracurriculars, I have aq lot of free time on my hands and have nothing better to do than to waste hours on Instagram.

15 books finished

Before quarantine, I never had time for anything other than schoolwork. All of this Free time has allowed for productive activities.



5 zoom calls with relatives

One thing that has been dramatically altered because of the quarantine was birthdays and other holidays. Like others, my family had to change plans and adapt to the world out of concern for our relatives and the safety of others; my whole family had a large video call to sing happy birthday to one of my cousins. On Passover, my mom still made traditional meals, but it wasn't the same without my grandparents and my cousins.



The time I wake up: after 10 am

Before quarantine, I used to wake up at 6 am. Now I go to bed after 1 am every day and wake up at around 11.

Number of times I left my house: 15

I go on walks a few times every week. Before quarantine, I never had time to jog around the block, however now it has become a weekly achievement.

Eve Goldman

On school nights I used to get six to seven hours of sleep now on some nights I get up to ten hours a night. I still spend six hours a day doing school work. I usually wear two

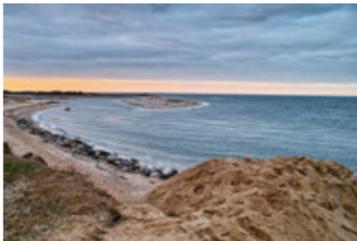
“ I am in touch with about ten friends daily. I like to reach out to them to check up on them during these difficult times.”

outfits a day, my PJs during school work and then after school, I get dressed and ready for the day. I was my hands five times a day. I have binge-watched at least seven different shows. I am in touch with about ten friends daily. I like to reach out to them to check up on them during these difficult times. I have learned to bake four different things and learned to cook three different meals. I have seen 15 more sunsets and five more sunrises then I would have seen if things were normal. I need one pair of glasses for screen and computer time. I only fell three times while learning how to skateboard. I have only seen my best friend once in person within the past two months. I re-organized my room for the seventh time today. I printed 183 pictures to put up on my wall. I am counting on the day that I get to hug my friends again.

Riley Hovsepian

**“Separation is a key part of getting quarantine.”**

During this stressful time, I found peace in going to the beach and the park every day at 6:30 pm with my dogs. I only go to the bluff and long beach. I don't enter any buildings with other people. There is only interaction with 4 people on a daily basis. Separation is a key part of getting quarantine lifted. Every day I walk 2 miles with one of my 2 dogs and run 2 miles by myself. This time

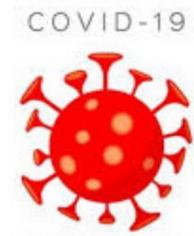


has been hard on so many people including the essential workers every night at 7 pm there is a shift change at the hospital by my house where many people line up to watch the shift change of about 30 cars. There are about 2 beaches closed because of the pandemic. After I return from the beach my family of four goes and has dinner that only takes like 10 minutes to make using my mom's ninja. Then I usually have about 4 things of homework due a day and I'm usually done within two hours. Then I normally watch the office of grey's anatomy for about 6 episodes before I go to bed every night. Because of the pandemic I've been able to look after myself more and enjoy time with my family.

# Pandemic Reflection



By: Kyana Cruz



I wouldn't be able to hang out with the people I love and care about the most. I waited and waited for the day to come where I'd be able to see them again, but the day never came since then. When I was told that our school has changed to online learning, I was confused at first. I was not expecting it to last for months. I was a bit skeptical about how online learning would work, but as weeks passed, it became easier for me to get used to it. Although I got used to doing most of my work online, I miss being able to sit in a classroom with friends and being able to talk to my teachers in person. However, I'm glad I'm able to work at my own pace without scrambling to get my work handed in on time.

Numbers of people testing positive increased more and more causing panic within myself. I lost motivation to do any work or even get out of bed. I felt sad and lonely during most of my time in quarantine. I couldn't find a reason for me to get out of my room no matter how hard my parents tried. It became more difficult for me to find the motivation to get my school work done. I began sleeping in more so the days would pass by faster. I would watch the governor speak every day hoping that good news would appear. I felt much anxiety when I would leave my house. But I knew that if I took precaution and stayed home, I'd be protecting myself and others around me.

Recently things have changed and became more positive. I've been more focused on my school working knowing that the numbers of corona cases are decreasing in New York. I had hope knowing that soon enough I'd be able to see my friends; however, I'd need to still take precautions. I learned that the world can't return back to its "normal" state, because this society must change to keep everyone safe. Of course, I wish things would go back to the way things were before when no one was wearing masks and gloves, but it's all for the better to keep people safe.

**“Stay home. Stay Safe. But most importantly, stay positive.”**

I wished my school year was different. I enjoyed my teachers in every class, including my classmates. In the end, I learned there's no reason to be afraid or panic. As long as you're safe and taking precautions, as well as caring for others, numbers will decrease and improvement will show. Stay home. Stay Safe. But most importantly, stay positive.

By: Ariana Tredger

We are now reaching our twelfth week in quarantine and things seem to be different since the beginning. It feels like it was just the start of the spreading of the Coronavirus pandemic when there were a bunch of unknowns and scary adjustments. After about a month of quarantine, I had finally gotten used to the new "normal". It was definitely weird for a while considering I had to begin remote learning from home and stop seeing my family and friends I would normally see often. Boredom definitely got to me after realizing there aren't a whole lot of things I could do while sitting at home all day. An average day in quarantine for me would be waking up to start schoolwork for about 3-4 hours a day, watch movies and facetime my friends and try my best to get outside for a little. For a while I was pretty angry about how our lives changed so fast and that there was nothing I could do about it. As a class of 2020 graduating senior, I can say this is not how I imagined my high school career would end. I was blinded by the fact that I will be missing out on all the "lasts" a senior would experience.



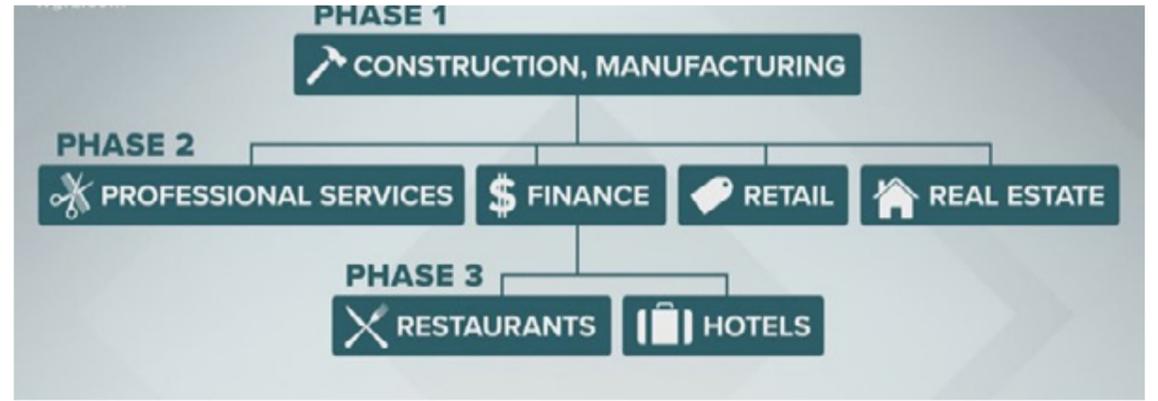
The ending of senior year is something every senior looks forward to, especially prom, graduation, and the final countdown on the last day of school. After finally accepting this is the end I am much more positive about the situation now. As far as quarantine goes it has brought me a lot of quality time with my family, which I love. My family and I have figured out many ways to pass the time including at home hibachi in our kitchen and playing Xbox adventure games with a huge raft in our living room. Out of all the sadness of this unfortunate ending to my senior year, there have been many laughs. It is very important to me to spend as much time as I can with my family before going off to college. I also got to celebrate my commitment to UAlbany at home with a bunch of decorations and homemade cupcakes, and I wouldn't have wanted to do it any other way. Some of the things I miss are my friends that I would see every day in school, that I haven't seen in months and going out to eat at restaurants. I am very hopeful things can start to go back to normal soon and we can resume our lives. At this point on June 8th, 2020 things are starting to look up. I hope I can soon see the people I haven't seen since March and from now on cherish every moment I can get because even just a normal Tuesday will be a good day.



normal Tuesday will be a good day.



# Pandemic Reflection



By: Julia Setteducati

This virus started out as something on the news, just like everything else. No one really thought it was going to get this big. Coronavirus has affected everyone's everyday life all over the world. First, schools closed. Everyone was excited to get a week or two off from school and be back for the rest of the year, but it later turned into most schools for the rest of the year, and we still have yet to see if we can even go back in September. Online learning has been different, and hard to get used to, but now it seems normal. Even though we don't have to leave our houses or wake up early, it's still hard to get used to not seeing friends every day. Another thing this pandemic has changed in everyday life is shopping. You can not get into most stores without a mask, and most people wear gloves too. Hand Sanitizer is being used so much more after you touch anything. The malls and local small businesses are closed, and most shopping has turned into online. Many products like soap, hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, even toilet paper, were or still are hard to find in many places. Basic supplies that we use every day are starting to get expensive or hard to find, because of such a high demand for them. Another way this has changed the world and people's lives is not being able to see friends or family. Holidays, birthdays, just seeing your family and friends is not as easy anymore. In order to see them, you have to stand six feet apart, wear gloves and masks, avoid going inside houses, many rules and things you have to do to make sure everyone stays safe that is so different from anything we've experienced before. Doctors and nurses are working harder than ever to keep people and their families safe from the virus. Small shops could go out of business because they can not open, or not many people are shopping there because it's not essential. Many have not left their house in a while out of fear or safety. Jobs are closed until further notice, some people are not making as much money as they were before. You can not even go out to eat anymore, all restaurants are take-out if they are even open. Covid-19 is one of the top causes of death in 2020. These changes are being made or have already been made all around the world, some countries and areas are worse than others. There are some states and countries starting to reopen, with the numbers of the virus decreasing consistently. Other states still have yet to open fully, but are in the process of trying to reopen, such as New York. This virus is nothing like anything that has happened during our lives, and we are learning something new about it every day. This pandemic has brought so many changes to the world and people's everyday lives, that some people are still adjusting to.



others. There are some states and countries starting to reopen, with the numbers of the virus decreasing consistently. Other states still have yet to open fully, but are in the process of trying to reopen, such as New York. This virus is nothing like anything that has happened during our lives, and we are learning something new about it every day. This pandemic has brought so many changes to the world and people's everyday lives, that some people are still adjusting to.

By: Riley Hovsepian

In 2020 the world went into a pandemic. Businesses were closed, people had to stay 6 feet apart and quarantine themselves in their own homes. This pandemic has caused serious job losses and spikes in depression. But not all bad came from this, nature is starting to rebuild itself. The dolphins are coming back in the ravines of Venice; Water pollution has gone down a great amount; And so much more to help the physical side of our country, not only lowering pollution but bringing species back to where they once were originally. This 2020 pandemic has been bittersweet for me. On the good aspects, I got to spend more time with my family but on the negative side, I lost the last few months of my senior year, my graduation how it was supposed to be, and my prom as it was supposed to be. Even though all these things happened, the good outweighs the bad on this. It might not be beneficial for the individual but it is beneficial for the world. The overwhelming need for PPE has created jobs creating them.

The lack of social interaction has been beneficial to some people. Some teenagers I've taken it upon themselves to become hairdressers at this time by dying their hair pink or blue. Some people have formed a closer bond with their families and rekindle old relationships even though they can't be face-to-face.



Just because we are in a pandemic doesn't mean we can't support the people who help us. As this trying time continues we see every day that families, friends, and coworkers are coming together to support the essential workers. The people such as nurses, firefighters, EMTs, and police officers are going in every day and putting themselves at risk to help others. Some of them can't even go home to see their family because they're in a high-risk job. As you drive through Smithtown and many towns across the US you'll see support for these essential workers in the form of signs or banners.

Many restaurants during this time have taken it upon themselves to help others they're donating food, reducing prices, and having contactless delivery to ensure the safety and well-being of their customers. As we slowly start to see a Break in the clouds when it comes to the reopening we get very excited. College is agreeing to reopen in the fall, restaurants, and bars reopening as soon as possible. The beaches have slowly started to re-open at half capacity but that's something right? Businesses such as restaurants are allowed outdoor seating slowly bringing our everyday lives back to normalcy. Not only are people excited to get back to their everyday lives but they're excited to hug the members of the family but they haven't been able to see is there a high-risk or see their friends and family that they haven't been able to travel to go see. The re-opening and the pandemic altogether are giving people a higher appreciation for what they have on a normal day.

**“The re-opening and the pandemic altogether are giving people a higher appreciation for what they have in a normal day.”**





# STARGIRL

By Sarah Finkelstein

Based on Jerry Spinelli’s bestseller, Disney+ brings the lighthearted, yet meaningful “Stargirl” to life in today’s world.

“Stargirl” is about an unconventional and seemingly magical girl who comes into the life of a lonely teen boy in Arizona, by changing his life and everyone around him forever. After being home-schooled all of her life, Stargirl decides to attend Mica High School, where she meets and befriends Leo. Everyone, including Leo is captivated by her kindness and uniqueness. She instantly transforms the atmosphere of the school, bringing pride and spirit to the community at football games and academic competitions.

However the plot for this movie is very predictable. Stargirl becomes a burden on the people of Mica and her individuality becomes a question of concern by the other students. Soon after an encounter with a peer, Stargirl leaves Arizona unannounced. The students reminisce about her impact on the school and memorialize her kindness through their memories.

The imagery throughout the film is absolutely beautiful, taking advantage of the southwest scenery. There are various times the camera highlights breathtaking pastel sunsets over the vast desert. However these beautiful images begin to entice the audience more than the expecting plot. Many times throughout the film I found myself waiting for more of the cinematic shots of the landscape rather than paying attention to the interactions between the characters. “Stargirl” ultimately falls short; the story intends to show how people who are different should be accepted and celebrated, however, this is not the case for Stargirl. After an incident, she is forced to tone down her style and personality in order to feel accepted in her community, additionally, she moves away soon after. This plot does not leave the lasting effect that is intended. It is almost as if Stargirl never existed rather and the great things she did for the community are forgotten.

Though the inherent lessons about individuality and not giving in to norms remain as valid as they were two decades ago, the film version, now on Disney+, can’t help but feel less valuable, particularly with similar movies like Wonder and Love, Simon, and even the streaming service’s recent Timmy Failure, doing a much better job at the same message. Although monumental when the story was originally written, Stargirl no longer has the same impact as it once did to teens who read it.



# Reviews

## Sugar Rush

By: Ariana Iredger

Netflix has brought together the finest, well known bakers and pastry chefs to host a new sweet show. “This is Sugar Rush!” says the host, Hunter Marsh. Sugar Rush is a new baking show “where time is the most important ingredient” for the contestants competing for the \$10,000 prize.

Each episode consists of three baking rounds with each being timed. Before the bakers are off to their stations they are greeted by the judges, Candace Nelson, founder of Sprinkles Cupcakes, Adriano Zumbo master pastry chef and a new guest judge each episode. Each baking team introduces themselves and their businesses back at home and what they wish to do if they win the prize money. Soon after, Hunter Marsh explains the three rounds and gives a que to start the clock. The teams quickly run to their baking stations to start planning the first round, the cupcake round. They have to create a cupcake based on the episode’s theme. For example in one episode the bakers had a design for each round inspired by Betsy Johnson, which was one of the guest judges. The designs entailed jewelry, dresses and more.

They have exactly three hours to complete the first and second round meaning after finishing the first cupcake challenge the bakers have to hit their buzzer bringing attention to the judges. The judges walk over to the baking station to eat and judge the cupcake based on looks and taste. Then the bakers quickly go back to work to do the second round, the confections. For the confections they have to create a dessert that looks like something else other than a pastry or something that can’t be eaten.

Even though the bakers are on a sugar rush to complete the next round they also have to keep in mind that they could be eliminated from the cupcake round. Once all four teams have completed the first round the judges go off to review and decide who will be going home. While the clock is ticking the bakers begin to face many challenges. Some challenges include forgetting ingredients or overbaking the desserts. When they are set back it takes time away that they are saving for the final round. The two lasting teams have the opportunity to bank time for the final cake round adding minutes to the additional 3 hours they already have. The bakers have to work carefully but fast to ensure they have a great cake coming with the little time they have.

After seeing Sugar Rush I recommend watching even if it’s just an episode or two. Watching the very talented bakers compete for the prize is something you don’t want to miss. I enjoy how through each round the teams explain their creations and what inspired them to make the dessert as well as what components go into them. Some of them can just be a simple cake or something out of the ordinary like incorporating wasabi into a cupcake. The bakers learn the true meaning of go big or go home or to play it safe. After watching I can definitely say I want to go bake something!



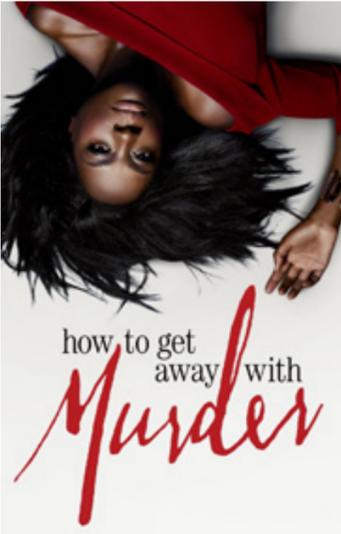
## How to Get Away with Murder

By: Anna

If you are a fan of criminal series this is a definite recommendation to watch this show. What makes this show standout from others I have watched, is the foreshadowing in the beginning and ending of each episode. (A couple minutes long.) The viewer gets a glimpse

of the climax of the season but not entirely? What I mean by this is that for example, the watcher would know that someone got killed but did not know who did it. Then the rest of the episodes would lead up to that event. With its quick-paced nature and multiple twists and reveals I think it’s a must watch for individuals that like scandals. As this show revolves around a professor and her students doing acts that are unjust under the law. While trying to make the justice system fair. I think that the writers provided great irony with this layout. There are some logical issues in the plot . But overall this is a fictional series. Other critics argue that the layout of the show is complicated. To that I argue that the plot/layout is what makes the show exciting . You find yourself asking questions that you don’t have the answer to until the show reveals the climax in the middle of the season. And it’s never what you thought it would be.

I rate this show 4/5 stars. After doing research, the show does not have an accurate portrayal of law or lawyers but this does not take away from the great acting. Viola Davis the main character, nails every single scene she is in, portraying this deeply flawed character beautifully. There is not enough credit given. That is not to say that the supporting cast is any less mesmerizing, they all bring their A- game consistently. What makes this show suspenseful is that it’s hard to figure out at first. Some may say it’s a love hate relationship with the characters and the plot. It’s a perfect mix of action and drama. How to get away with murder is rated PG-14 so I would not reccomend for younger audiences. On that note, I would push viewers to explore their options in television and try watching a great show, How to Get Away with Murder.



“ It’s a perfect mix of action and drama.”

# Reviews

## That ‘70s Show

By: Eve Goldman



angst of the ‘70s seems so alluring. Not to mention the rise of rock.

I think my only problem with “That ‘70s Show” is that there are some seasons where they kind of miss their marks on what better seasons provided. I’m not fond of season 4 or 8 They almost seem lost in time, nothing major occurs to move the plot along, the episodes seem almost day to day. In simpler terms these episodes weren’t really vital to the show as a whole. In addition the actress who played Eric’s sister Laurie died mid series and was replaced. I know it’s kind of late to talk about but it’s kind of weird you know. Anyways I think “That ‘70s Show” is a timeless gem that is old enough to be a background noise but can have something relatable for all ages.The dynamic between Topher Grace and the two linchpins of the show’s run: Kurtwood

“That '70s Show is an entertaining, and funny series with plenty of jokes, and stories embedded into the script to appeal to almost everyone.”

is an entertaining, and funny series with plenty of jokes, and stories embedded into the script to appeal to almost everyone.

That ‘70s Show is of interests to parents and teens for different reasons. For mature audiences, it’s nostalgia for more naive times that prompts an affection for the show -- something is reassuring about kids gathering in the basement, content to just to “hang out.” Kids, meanwhile, tune in for the charming cast and relevant situations ,although they might find the ‘70s political references confusing and the fashions hilarious, they’ll identify with the characters’ struggles with dating and surviving high school, which are common teen matters.

What makes this series so triumphant is its cast, all of who seem comfortable with their conventional roles. The actors profit from the show’s strong writing, which is sometimes subtly political, but more frequently light in content. The result is an enjoyable trip back in time. Although the series has lots of sexual suggestions, it’s done in a way that doesn’t so much linger as allude to the free-love period of the 1970s. Whether or not this is appropriate viewing for teenagers is solely up to parents and guardians to decide.

One of my favorite parts of the show is how accurate the lifestyle of the ‘70s is represented. Not that I would know or anything. And watching these characters interact in a time so vastly different from a time where I grew up, it just makes me wish I could have experienced it for myself. Don’t get me wrong, I love living in this era, but the innocence and revolutionary

Smith and Debra Jo Rupp. Smith’s climactic chops gave a hard-bitten gravitas to Red Forman, one of TV’s all-time great no-nonsense dads. Rupp, meanwhile, was generally all nonsense as Kitty Forman, a live-action cartoon whose jolly hostility to confrontation makes her no less compassionate or protective as a mother figure. With a cast as young and bright as That ‘70s Show’s, the Turners and Brazill left themselves open to wandering eyes and future cast departures. Smith and Rupp—who stayed on for all eight seasons, along with Kunis, Prepon, Masterson, and Valderrama—served as solid anchors, always giving the show a place to come back to. To Conclude, That ‘70s Show

# The Best Gift Covid Gave Me

By: Riley Hovsepian

During this pandemic my mom purchased a ninja fryer. This is an air fryer which makes foods healthier to eat which my mom loves. This contraption has made beautiful meals for us. My mom isn’t home for dinner because of her work so now that she’s home she’s so excited to cook for us. The first night was a little crazy but she made us chicken cutlets which were amazing. As quarantine continued she came up with many more meals. We had steak, burgers, salmone, teriyaki chicken, and hot dogs, all without a grill or anything other than the ninja. This pandemic has given my mom a chance to sit down and spend time with my dad, sister, and me. Everyday at 5pm on the dot we set the table “the proper way” as my mom calls it before we go and help her in the kitchen. To start we wash our hands for obvious reasons, then we go and prepare the food. Then after that we put what we are cooking in the air fryer. We only need to wait about 10-15 minutes, kinda crazy we can make healthier food in such a short amount of time.

Then it’s time to prepare the entrees. We wash our hands again and then we take the food out of the air fryer. In my family it’s go big or go home so every meal is just like a thanksgiving feast every night. In preparation of the entree we usually put some type of green such as salad, green beans or broccoli. Then we usually use a starch which could be anything from rice, mash potatoes, sweet potatoes, and or small baked potatoes. As a small addition we will put a type of bread which could be garlic bread, cheesy bread or regular rolls with butter.

After all this is done we move to setting the plates. My sister and mom are slightly germophobic so before we set the plates we wash our hands then we continue on our way. My mom and I are the ones who set the plates so we put all of the food we made on the plates and set them on the table. The dinners we have been able to have are something we don’t usually get to enjoy as a family. Even though this pandemic is horrible and hectic it has brought my family together and closer in many ways and food being one of them.

During our sit down dinners my mom always drops a fact or two about the ninja air fryer and how much she loves it and how it was such a good investment it was. Even though this is a crazy time where we can’t see people she still finds a way to tell all of her friends about the ninja air fryer. This is the best thing to happen during quarantine. Seeing my family all together is something I missed the most. Having my sister home from Arizona and having my mom home for family dinners is something that means alot to me.

## Only Mine

By: Kyana Cruz

During my time of the Coronavirus outbreak, I was able to watch many movies on Netflix. I came across one that caught my eye just by watching the trailer. If you enjoy watching movies based on true stories, Only Mine is definitely worth watching. The story of Julie Dillon and her stalker ex-boyfriend, David Barragan.

This thrilling movie is based on the true story of Laura Kucera. In 1955, Kucera was kidnapped by her ex-boyfriend, Brian Anderson, and was reportedly shot in the side of her head twice and once in the shoulder. She was left to die in a ditch, unconscious, for four days before Anderson led authorities to her body. He was then sent to 55 years in prison. On September 5th, 1955, Laura was on her way to visit her grandmother; however, she died in a car accident moments after her 50-day recovery from the shooting.

At first, I was a bit skeptical about viewing this movie. My initial thought that it was going to be one of those weird, bad, stalker movies on Netflix. While I was watching the trailer, I decided to view the comments and view people’s opinions if this movie was worth watching. Although the comments weren’t as helpful, I gave it a chance regardless. While watching the film, the beginning was slow and boring for me. Not much had happened until the middle and end. The relationship between Julie and David seemed normal and simple in the beginning; however, little did Julie know that her boyfriend was obsessed and a complete stalker.



The downfall that I had experienced while watching this film was the acting. The main characters were not great at expressing the emotions that should’ve been shown during the movie. I didn’t feel scared or worried about the characters until the last 30 minutes of the movie. However, the movie did capture the events that occurred in 1955. The scenery and the way the actors were portrayed throughout the movie was great.

You notice how David’s emotions towards Julie change throughout the movie. He seems charming and caring at first, later on, it becomes much more obsessive and creepy. Towards the near end of the movie, David screams out “If I can’t have you, no one else can!”. This is the “turning point” of the movie. During this specific scene, it became more interesting to watch because you notice how chilling and horrifying their relationship gets.

The movie also included side interviews with different characters of the movie. It gave a more realistic feel as if you’re watching a documentary. An important element that was shown in this movie was Julie’s mother. She told a story about internal strength and power. Julie remembers her mother telling this folktale while she was shot, it gave her strength and hope that she was going to survive and recover.

Overall this movie was pretty creative for a low budget film. The concept of the storyline was sick and twisted; however, it was very enjoyable to watch. I’d recommend this movie if you’re into thriller and psychological movies.

## Penny Dreadful: City of Angels

By Sarah Finkelstein

After nearly four years, Penny Dreadful has returned to TV, however, it is not at all the same supernatural anthology that took the world by storm. The new spin-off, Penny Dreadful: City of Angels combines the history of Los Angeles with the familiar supernatural nature of its predecessor.

Throughout the first episode of Penny Dreadful: CoA, there are many introductions to different story arcs. The new series takes place in 1938, an interesting period in Californian history. Penny Dreadful: CoA follows Tiago Vega as he attempts to balance work and family life. He’s the first Chicano police detective in the LAPD. Others in the LAPD

harass Tiago and make racist remarks, still, Tiago is driven to prove them wrong and succeed. He and his partner investigate crimes throughout the city. Additionally, the government of Los Angeles is preparing for the development of the Arroyo Seco Motorway, a major endeavor that will inescapably transform Los Angeles into an urbanized, more interconnected metropolis. the construction of the parkway will destroy a segment of the city and displace the Mexican community. Tiago sees how hard local authorities have made life for his mother and siblings, as His brothers are leading the movement to protest the destruction of their home. They feel Tiago is deceiving his own people by siding with the cops to support construction.

The only connection to this new series to the older Penny Dreadful is the brief, yet impactful scenes with Magda and Santa Muerte. Although these two are only on the sideline of the plot, they influence all of the actions of the other characters. Magda, usually invisible to the human eye, walks the earth and tempts the people to act on their impulses. Her chilling presence ensures chaos wherever she goes. Her sister, Santa Muerte, is seen as a stoic character who brings humans to the afterlife. These characters create a dramatic, ominous perspective for the show as conflict between the police and the Mexican community transpires.

The series tackles a lot of topics: the building of the motorway and its effects on the community, race riots, racism and antisemitism, the effect of the supernatural beings in Las Angeles, and Tiago’s experiences at the precinct as he investigates a murder.

The first Penny Dreadful was a one-of-a-kind, unique series that always kept the audience captivated with its dramatic and exciting plot. City of Angels, although similarly dramatic, is not like the original series, as it does not seem to be a horror-based drama about the supernatural. Instead, City of Angels seems to be more of its own series with little comparisons, which is a good quality to have.



## Editorials

# WARNING: This Product Contains Nicotine

By: Kyana Cruz

For multiple years, vaping has been a controversial topic. Teens and adults of all ages have been hooked on using these products for several reasons. With various flavors and devices, there's a greater chance that more people can become ill from inhaling these products. It has been around since 2003. Vaping has appeared in diverse news sources, advertisements have been viewed by the public to buy more vaping products, and recently doctors have discovered more advantages and disadvantages of using these products. There have been many laws passed for banning nicotine products in multiple states across the US. By using these products, some use it for coping with anxiety and depression to keep themselves calm and relaxed. Others argue that vaping devices should be banned from states or however, be limited. The fight over vaping is the latest tension in a long-term debate about how society should address the use of nicotine products.

Vaping leads to serious respiratory illnesses that result in hospitalization. As of 2020, 60 deaths have been reported related to vaping. More than 4 million Americans vape every day. According to WebMD, Merideth Berkman, a parent against vaping, has agreed that teens are more likely to buy products with flavors they will enjoy. Flavored vapes, such as cotton candy, mango, or berry, appeal more to children and teens. She proposed the idea of removing flavors that teens love off the market. By doing so, this may decrease the usage of e-cigarettes. Recently, more and more ads have been appearing for teens and young adults to engage in buying vaping related products. In February 2020, Juul bought ads that have been appearing on youth sites, such as Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, magazines, and educational sites for middle and high school students. A lawsuit was filed by Massachusetts attorney general for the appearances of the ads. The lawsuit portrayed images of the ads that were on websites, mobile apps, and social media, that were clearly seen to be targeted at teens and younger children. Many parents are concerned about the influence of vaping on younger children, especially when an ad is being portrayed in front of them almost every day. Public officials are scrambling for solutions to help solve the problem of the influence of e-cigarettes on teens and young adults. On February 6th, 2020, Trump administration officials announced in September that they were going to come across a "flavor ban" policy. This policy will go into effect which will result in a number of flavored vaping products being taken off the US market. Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said to CNN Health, "The final policy is riddled with loopholes that allow thousands of flavored e-cigarette products to remain available. will not stop the youth e-cigarette epidemic that is adding a generation of our kids."



Others argue that the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) should not ban e-cigarette products due to health reasoning. People believe that by banning these products, it can end in a catastrophe due to the grave risk to public health. Research shows that e-cigarettes are much safer and harmless than conventional cigarettes. According to the New York Times, prohibition is not a good long-term solution, for a number of reasons. For example, this does not guarantee that this will prevent teenagers from getting e-cigarette products. Also, this would most likely force more than 11 million adults to pick between cigarettes and black market products, if this prohibition took place. Alex Norica, and others at Vice, has reported that Colorado was the only state taking a measured approach to the increase of vape injuries and deaths. Colorado proposed in banning the oil-thickening substance, that can be found in cannabis vapes, which CDC recently stated is the official reason for lung injuries. Researchers have discovered that lung diseases seemed to be the result of Vitamin E acetate, which is mainly found in black market e-cigarette products containing THC, which is the main psychoactive chemical in marijuana. Therefore, many sources argue the fact that it is not the devices to ban; however, it should be the chemicals in the products. This would reduce lung disease and injuries. Yes, either way, these substances entering your body can do harm, it will be more of a struggle to ban the entirety of the product due to the fact that people will find other ways to receive these devices.

Author Amy Fairchild, dean of Ohio State University's College of Public Health stated the following "There is no question that e-cigarettes are not safe, but it's a question of proportionate risk." Meaning, instead of waiting for a solution to this long-term debate, allow smokers to choose the lesser of the two. Cigarettes and e-cigarettes both cause harm to our bodies; however, smokers should pick a less harmful device over a greater one that can cause more damage.

In the end, the debate on vaping products and cigarettes is still continuing today. More laws and prohibitions have been passed as days go by. The substances that harm our bodies should not be included in these products. Popular flavors should be taken off the market to decrease the usage of teens and young adults using these products. This may not stop the problem of teens using due to the fact there's always a way that people can get their hands on these products. By creating a lesser, harmful, product, this may decrease the number of illnesses and deaths.

# Does Technology Belong in Classrooms?

By: Julia Setteducati

School districts have spent millions of dollars to bring technology into classrooms, so that the students will be introduced to more and more technology, with the hope that these devices will be a way to increase student learning. Technology is getting better day by day, and more and more schools are introducing new ways of learning to their students. Some people may argue that technology in classrooms is a distraction to students, and may get in the way of learning, but is that really true?

Technology is everywhere, but does it belong in classrooms? Access to the internet gives students more ways to study and learn things through websites and even games, but those devices could be causing distractions. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development did a study in 2015 with 15 year-olds across different nations. They found that the students who used computers and other devices the most had the lowest math and reading scores. "Those that used the internet everyday do the worst," says OECD director for Education and Skills. Another problem is the allowance of phones in classrooms and schools. Majority of students have their phone on them during school, and are using them during classes. A study at Harvard University states that 92% of students use their phones and send texts during class. Devices like cell phones, computers and I pads, are what leads to lower grades, due to being distracted during classes. These devices being allowed in classrooms are causing students to be distracted, leading to lower grades. Students who have access to their phones during class are using them to not do their school work, but instead playing games or scrolling through social media.

Another situation caused by the increase of technology would be the fact that not every family can afford technology in their homes. For many class assignments and projects, students need to have access to the internet and computers to be able to complete them. According to NCES, in 2017, about 28% of families have no access to the internet in their homes, and around 19 million Americans do not have access to service and internet. These students without the internet are shown to be more connected with classmates, and doing better in school. From the New York Times, "Networked devices will not shrink the class divide in education. If anything, it will widen it."



Even though technology can be a distraction, devices like Smart Boards, computers, I pads and other devices in schools can create new ways for students to learn, and widen their range of learning, with access to sites online. For example, Duolingo, letting them learn different languages outside of school online. Sites online can help with learning. There are websites that offer learning opportunities and help students study for their classes. There are many games and practice tests you can find online that may help students. There are some things that may help students online, but there are distractions all over the internet, and who's keeping them from playing games on the computer instead of doing school work?

One way these problems can be solved is to limit the time students have on their devices. If they need to get something done, and they don't have a limit, they might start playing games or going on social media. If there is a limit, they will not have enough time to be playing games and finishing their assignments. Another way to help is not allowing phones in the classrooms. If students have their phones on them, they will get easily distracted by them and end up texting or going online. If they are not allowed to have their phone in classes, they can't get distracted. One more way would be limiting the sites the students are allowed on during school. If they are still allowed the devices, but have limited sites to go on besides school work related websites, they won't get as distracted and might focus more on their school work. Schools should not completely get rid of technology, but instead limit students' freedom online to prevent them from getting distracted by other websites.

The reason that technology is not fully benefiting schools is students' grades are dropping, and they are not putting as much effort into their work as they could. If devices were limited inside of school, then regained outside of school, students reading and math scores could go up. Higher scores and grades would highly benefit the students later on in their lives.

**“ Studies have shown that the majority of students use their phones or computers, etc. for off-task things like social media and games.”**

I think that if technology says the same in classrooms now, this problem is going to get worse and worse. I think this because technology is evolving day by day, even now as we speak. If technology keeps getting better and better, then in the future there will be more and more distractions and students' scores will keep decreasing. Students scores are already dropping because of technology as shown in studies, and if technology keeps coming into classrooms to the point where all school work is on I pads and computers everywhere, students scores will just keep decreasing and students will not be learning as much because of these distractions. A survey shows that about 50% of students get distracted by their devices during class and the students said that 49% of the things they do on these devices were not school related.



Technology in classrooms is beneficial, while at the same time a distraction to students. Studies have shown that the majority of students use their phones or computers, etc. for off-task things like social media and games. Because of these distractions students' scores are dropping. If some rules don't change in schools about the amount of technology people should be using, their scores may continue to decrease. Schools should try to limit the websites and use of technology during class time to help prevent students from being distracted. Younger students are even using technology in and out of school at such young ages, and studies have shown that kids who use more technology are more distant with classmates. If students who use more technology then others tend to be less involved with classmates, and have lower scores, why would encouraging the use of technology in schools be a good idea?



## Editorials

# Everyone's a Winner

By: Kathleen Alexander

You're sitting at your child's championship soccer game. It's a Saturday afternoon, clear skies with a high of 72 degrees, a perfect day to cheer on your child as they play to win the championship trophy. As you're watching the game, however, you notice that no one is keeping score. You consider bringing this to someone's attention but then hold back, figuring you would find out who wins by the end of the game. When the time runs out and the game ends, you get excited because you know that your child's team has scored more points than the other team. But much to your surprise, they proceed to call all of the kids back onto the field and hand every single kid a small plastic trophy.

The scene that has just been described to you is one that seems to be happening all too often. There's a stigma going around that children are more sensitive now than they used to be years ago. Therefore, adults are trying to create a world where everyone succeeds at something and no one feels like a failure. This world is one where every child is a winner and receives recognition for merely participating in an activity. Whether those activities are sports, STEM, music, theatre, art, or any of the other numerous activities kids participate in to find out what they like best, kids typically receive a trophy or certificate at the end of their participation. This is given to the child mainly to persuade them to keep participating in the activity while also boosting their self-confidence and making them feel good about themselves. While giving these kids a new sense of confidence is a positive thing, the psychological effects that come from giving children rewards just for participating can be detrimental. It's better to give children recognition when they have earned it so that they truly understand what it means to succeed.



We all love receiving awards. There's no better feeling than hearing someone call your name and then walking towards the presenter who then hands you a big trophy or an official-looking certificate. However, kids today are being presented with awards not for excelling, but just participating in activities. Take the soccer game for instance. One team scored more goals than the other team, making them the rightful winners of the championship. But the adults in charge feared that the other team would be devastated by the loss and couldn't bear to see the other kids upset. Thus, the system where everyone gets a trophy was born. Of course, it's nice that every kid feels recognized for their efforts, but what's going to happen to those kids later in life when that system ceases to exist? What's going to happen when all of a sudden, someone beats them in something and they no longer get an award for their participation? Those kids will most likely receive a harsh wake-up call telling them that they won't necessarily get rewarded for everything they do in life and some of them might not be able to handle that harsh truth and react negatively. Our society is raising kids to believe that, as long as they try, they are always going to find success. If adults really want to prepare their kids for the real world, they need to teach them that life is not always going to give you a trophy for your participation.

Not only does the participation award impact the kids who didn't really win, it equally impacts the kids who did win as well. Imagine being one of those kids on the winning soccer team. You've been keeping score the whole time and you know your team won. At the end of the game, you're really excited to receive your trophy. You've been looking forward to it the whole game and now the time has come. The presenters call up your team and they hand you the small plastic trophy. At first you're really excited, but then you look over and see them handing the losing team the same trophies that your team got. You understandably feel hurt and upset because your team earned those trophies and now the other team is getting the same reward as you even though they lost. It takes away all of the excitement and makes your win feel special. It gives you less of an incentive to try to win next time and every other time after. By implementing the "everyone's a winner" system, society is raising people who don't try for anything because they know they'll be rewarded either way. We need to give these kids an incentive to try to excel, because if everyone wins, is anyone truly a winner?

There are a lot of incentives to try new activities. In some cases, you get to learn a new skill that you would never have picked up if you didn't participate in the activity. In some cases, activities can force you to become more physically active and teach you to become self-disciplined. One of the greatest benefits of participating in a new activity is getting to meet new people who share your interests and possibly make new friends. However, some people don't think this way. Some parents sign their kids up for activities hoping that their child will get a participation award at the end of it to boost their self-confidence. This isn't necessarily a bad way to think, after all as a parent it's nice to see your children being recognized for their work. However, this shouldn't be the sole reason why their child is participating in the activity. A kid should participate in activities that they genuinely enjoy, even if they don't receive an award at the end. By staying in an activity they don't like just to get rewarded at the end, kids are learning that if they don't like doing something, they should just stick it out until they are rewarded for it. If this is the case, they won't put in 100% of their effort into what they're doing and they'll never find success, making participating in the activity a huge waste of time. If your child finds themselves only participating in something to receive an award at the end, save both them and yourself the wasted time and find an activity they actually enjoy.

Opinions against the use of participation awards may sound harsh and cruel. After all, it's not realistic to expect a child as young as four or five years old to understand the fact that they can't win at everything all the time. But by continuing to give children awards for their participation, we are giving them false ideas of what the real world is like. Kids need to learn that they're not going to succeed all the time, and that's okay. They need to learn to accept the loss and move on. If we teach them this at a young age, they'll be better prepared to handle not winning all the time as they get older. This is how we will raise a society of men and women who give their best effort, but also understand that not everyone's a winner.