

JFYNet Podcast – APRIL 2020, Impact of School Shutdown, Student Perspectives

GREG: *Today's podcast features students from Needham High School, Durfee High School in Fall River, Bridgewater State University and UMass. Amherst, as they share how the statewide school shutdown has affected their educational programs...*

SASHA: ...that's all being like that opportunity is being taken away from me, and it feels almost fake to have these classes on zoom...

GREG: *...their extracurricular activities...*

MAGGIE: ...for dance. I mean, it's kind of bizarre doing ballet in my hallway...

GREG: *...and how the Covid-19 Corona virus may create a new normal in the future...*

HENRY: ...so, you know, if I have to take class in my basement until Christmas, that would probably not be great...

GREG: *This podcast was created by JFYNetWorks, a Boston based nonprofit provider of remote learning programs to schools, students and parents. JFY's individualized, self-paced curricula help raise individual and school performance measures by maintaining grade-level skills and combatting learning loss. JFY provides online ELA and math curricula aligned to state and college standards from grade 6 through high school, with personal support online and via phone from friendly instructional coaches like yours truly. For JFYNetWorks, I'm **GREG** Cunningham.*

CHRIS and **JARIN** are juniors at Durfee High School in Fall River. They explain how their switch to distance learning happened with little warning.

CHRIS: One of the things with the Corona virus is that it came up unexpectedly, and a lot of us high school students we didn't really expect it to affect us the way it is now, as of right now, especially in Fall River and all nearby cities in Massachusetts were doing mostly online work.

JARIN: Yeah, so as for Durfee, at least a lot of our... a lot of our stuff is on Google class or no. And it's pretty hard for us to actually get anything done because you can't really learn new work without being in class sessions. So I think that this is going to really, drastically affect the rest of our high school.

CHRIS: I agree, like it's our where sometimes our teachers are posted, at least one teacher posted every other day, and then sometimes teachers are posting every day. And then you have that one teacher that's posing like a packet of work per week, and they're expecting you to get that all done. And they're not time management, because now that there's any more work than we usually would be doing class now. Now that's taking up more time outside of school that we would do like during school hours.

JARIN: I think that is. I don't say I'm not going to say it's not completely right for them to be assigning work for us. Obviously, we need to be getting something done. But the way, the way that they should be more coordinated. So we should have some math. English. A lot of it now is every teacher has their own. They submit their own stuff, so you could have six assignments and there will be days when you have six assignments and there'll be days they'll be like four days in a row when you will have nothing

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CHRIS: Exactly. Exactly. Like even my math teacher. She's given us work every single day, but she's been given us like six different parts that work every day. And then my English teacher has been expecting us to read like a chapter for every week. And like even my science teacher, I haven't gone anything from him yet. And he said he might not give us anything until we get back. So it's like all it's a game like, that's how that's how it really is. You don't know when they're going to give it to you or what they're going to give it to you, and they don't know really how to time management, cause they're not in touch like we are.

GREG: *Technology, as CHRIS and JARIN, point out, is a major factor as to whether students can successfully continue learning until the end of this academic year.*

JARIN: And what about the people that don't have technology at home? I feel like that's one of the big things here to

CHRIS: For instance, one of our mutual friends. He all last year didn't really have WiFi at his house and stuff and he really couldn't do that. And so what him trying to do all this school work, I have a feeling that he's not going to be able to get it all done because the library's closed. All are like means of using free WiFi like the libraries and like going to McDonald's and Dunkin Donuts. You can't do that right now because of the quarantine. They're not allowing it. You can't be in a group setting of 25 or more people can't be in a fast food restaurant, they're not open. They are only open for take-out or the drive thru.

GREG: *EVAN, a senior Durfee High School, explains how he has been able to stay in touch with his teachers after the school closed in March. But how inconsistent communication has presented challenges to learning and worry about how it will impact grades.*

EVAN: It's been quite difficult. I still have contact with the teachers by the app called Zoom. It's a video app, but it's just once a week, and most of the times I'm not available at that time that they are available. Ah, and when I do, I don't understand that much of the work and it's been challenging. So since we do not have a term four going, uh, there's not going to be a term four this year. It's just extending from three all of the assignments that they put out they are required, Um, and if you just don't do them, then it's going to really affect your grades and possibly graduate. Other teachers, um, they post work every day, and it's due by the end of the week.

GREG: *HENRY is a senior at Needham High School and realizes this ending to his high school career will be anything but normal*

HENRY: Senior year. You know, we go through Senior fall and I hate...I don't want to like be a fear monger, but in my opinion it was as bad if not worse than you and your spring, at least for me. And then, you know, we get through all the hard stuff and basically right when it's supposed to get, you know, right when everything we did for the last four years, it's supposed to, like, be okay. And we can just, you know, enjoy being with our friends. That's when the pandemic happens. So I think the general mood for a lot of people in my grade is just sort of, you know, sadness mixed with bitterness. We did everything that everyone else did, except we don't have...We'll probably won't have a prom. We will have a traditional graduation. We won't have a bunch of senior events that typically make all that other stuff okay,

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GREG: As **HENRY** explains, school work at least provides him with some way to pass the time.

HENRY: My gov[ernment] homework for this week will take me not even 15 minutes, whereas I think I'll be spending a lot of time doing random psy[chology] assignments. So I don't know. I've seen a lot of people like complaining and saying like, Oh, we would never have had two hours of homework without you know if it was a normal school, but honestly, it keeps me busy, so I can't really complain.

GREG: **IAN**, a junior Durfee High School, explains. Trying to pass the time while not going to school is one of the hardest parts of the school shut down

IAN: For some of us, i.e., me, that is hard to do because I like to do things a lot. I can't really sit still. I've done video games. I've played card games, board games, done some crafts. I've tried to watch videos and I've done it successfully. But after a while, they just get boring. So you kind of ponder on what you want to do and how boring that is. I'm extremely bored with it because I've already done it all. I've done it all to the point where it's like beating a dead horse, and I'm just trying to find something. But I can't and I know everybody is probably going to be, Why don't you read a book? That would be cool if I could find a book that I like. See the problem with that is, I don't read a lot in the first place, but I also haven't found a lot of books that piqued my interest.

GREG: **MAGGIE** is a junior at Needham High School, a time when there is often great anxiety about classwork. Now, as she explains, that anxiety has shifted.

MAGGIE: This is obviously not an ideal scenario, definitely not like everything that's happened. I feel like as a junior, this is supposed to be the time when we're kind of really doing the most work. It's supposed to be one of the most stressful times of high school, and it's kind of weird because it's really not stressful in the traditional ways. Like we're not stressed about AP exams because they're kind of irrelevant at this point. Um, I know for me like I had spent a lot of time prepping for the march SAT, like a lot of time. And when that got canceled, that was like, honestly, one of the things that bummed me out the most because I felt like I put a lot of time and effort into that. I don't get to show my effort there. I had tons of college tours canceled. I'm actually supposed to be seeing Northwestern right now, like on campus right now, but obviously I'm not there, so that kind of stinks because we won't get to see as many schools, but hopefully we'll get to see them next year.

GREG: **SASHA** is also a junior at Needham High School and worries about the work they are currently completing and how it feels fake.

SASHA: I, like **MAGGIE** was supposed to take the March SAT. And I definitely didn't study as much as **MAGGIE** did. But I still needed to take that test because for obvious reasons, like college admissions, and then it got cancelled, Seeing that the June SAT also got canceled and being so uncertain about how that's going and seeing that the SAT maybe online now, it's just freaking me out so much because as **MAGGIE** mentioned, college admissions is a huge thing for all the juniors. And a lot of schools haven't gone test optional yet. Some schools are, but it's a lot of uncertainty around that specific area of like the college admissions process. Also, **MAGGIE** touched on this to junior spring, especially this really intense,

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really hard part of junior year, and you're supposed to get a ton of work done, and I was really looking forward to that and just seeing all of this effort that I'm going to put into junior spring payoff in the end. And now that's all being like that opportunity is being taken away from me. And it feels almost fake to have these classes on Zoom And, like, do this work that doesn't feel as real and see 45 minute long AP exams, replacing three our tests that were supposed to take. And I feel really bad for kids who paid a ton of money for AP exams and now aren't going to be able to take like the real deal tests. So all of that just makes it feel like we're not ending up in a place where we're supposed to be because we're not putting as much effort in and classes are definitely super, super weird right now.

GREG: ABBY, a member of the Needham High School junior class, worries not just about classes, but about this seemed lack of control she now has over her own learning.

ABBY: ...and it's just this big, like black cloud of uncertainty around everything, everything in anything And, um, yeah, classes just haven't been the same, especially I don't like the way that our school personally has really dealt with it. It...we're not doing as much as like, I feel like there's a middle ground that just really hasn't been reached. And there's no lick right solution for every school.

GREG: SHAYAN on is a freshman at U Mass Amherst and shows the contrast between high school and college structure and the distance learning expectations he is currently experiencing in his classes.

SHAYAN: I guess that a as a freshman right now for as a first year like second semester, first year student, lot of my classes at UMass Amherst are already pretty big. So none of them are synchronous Zoom classes. So that's been pretty easy, because I've just been able to, you know, whenever of whenever, in the day that I wake up, I can just go on switch on the lecture, take my notes, do what I need to do for the week like schedule up my week. However, I need to. I personally have been just following what I've been doing at school just so you could easy. Same number of classes I would do back on campus. I'm keeping sticking to that same schedule. It's been...I guess because, you know, I've been in the lecture setting, you know, like for the past two semesters, it hasn't been that different, like just going to, you know, watching the lecture and then taking notes on my laptop, like next to it or something that hasn't been so bad, I guess. Like being able to interact with the Professor, obviously, you can't do that. I've been trying to take advantage of the office hours that my professor put up on Zoom. It's been as close to like going as you can get to, like, go on a normal. Normally, seeing your professor's again, I think soon is a pretty good platform, for that's pretty just like on the call whenever you need. Yeah, but other than that, like, obviously you can't replicate, uh, what you get on campus. So that's it's been tough to learn, but I've been making the best of it...like best I can...Best as you can make of it, I think, in this situation.

GREG: ALYSSA is a senior at Bridgewater State University and realizes she is lucky to be taking a smaller workload to end her college career.

ALYSSA: I'm lucky. Um, I only have three classes. I have my seminar class, which talks about what's going on in our internship. I have my community intervention class, and I have my stress management class from my health elective. So I'm lucky I don't have too many classes in the workloads. Too bad, not too bad. However, I'm only speaking for myself. I know a lot of my friends who currently have 5 to 6 classes that have now gone completely online, and it's a lot of work. Um, I think professors and teachers need

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to take into consideration that a lot of our assignments that we originally had plans and a lot of the objectives we had to meet for the curriculum this semester aren't going to be met because of this, because there's only so much you can do at home. So I really hope that teachers take that into consideration when assigning assignments and giving students a workload. Because students don't just have one teacher in one class. We have multiple classes.

GREG: *education is only one aspect affected by the school shutdown. CHRIS and JARIN discuss the loss of the sports spring season due to the cancellation of school for the rest of the year.*

CHRIS: We're supposed to have spring season right now, and right now we're not having spring season. We're out of school and it was supposed to start. We're supposed to start a while ago...

JARIN: What was the plan? I know, I know some of the coaches were talking about having scrimmages, but

CHRIS: yeah, but the only thing is, what, Uh, you can't really have scrimmages right now because obviously the Corona virus. But after, even then, maybe they might have practices in scrimmages. But it's interesting. It's a waiting game to have a spring season.

JARIN: I don't think that you would have damages because of the no groups of 10. People are more.

CHRIS: I agree. They're probably not. I don't see how they're going to be able to do that.

JARIN: I think it's all just hypothetical.

GREG: *EVAN is a senior and will miss out being part of the Durfee High School volleyball team for his final year of high school, and this may have an impact on his future college plans.*

EVAN: Also, I'm not so worried but said because I do play volleyball so all the sports have been canceled and um, I played volleyball because it could give me a scholarship to a college, and also I like it. So if you could give me a scholarship to a college and just help me out and it could help me. But I'm not going to experience what I like because of this whole thing going around, because it's my senior year and I want to be able to play sports and do my own thing.

GREG: *But it's not just sports that are being impacted by the shutdown. Other extracurricular activities have also been impacted, as MAGGIE, SASHA and ABBY all explain*

MAGGIE: for dance. I mean, it's kind of bizarre doing ballet in my hallway. Ah, definitely, really not ideal in that sense. And we're pretty sure we're not going to have a performance at the end of the year. And that really sucks, because it's basically our one show we get a year, and we put a lot of time and effort into that.

SASHA: So I know it's not as bad for me as a junior as it would be for like **HENRY**, because it's a senior year. But states was something I was really looking forward to, and the tournament we host at our school was something I was really, really looking forward to because I think as a team that's something we love and we value a lot that experience. So we kind of lost that. And it just makes the season feel like it never really ended in a way that it should have. And NSDA's is the natural speech Invade Association

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Tournament are cancelled as well, and they're going to put online. And I know that s days is the one tournament. I was really, really looking forward to this year because I had actually qualified this year by myself. And I wanted to break and see myself be successful in an event I'd really started this year, and I can't really do that anymore. And I'm really scared about the way that's going to work because it's online Zoom calls for Extemp speaking. So it's just really scary going into that without knowing what to do.

ABBY: and as a performing arts student as well. All of my activities...our Spring Musical got canceled like two days before we're supposed to open. And I'm a member of our acapella group and Chorus in school. It's just really hard for us as a community because you really can't do anything like there...so other clubs. It's hard for athletics as well, but like there are some other clubs, that it's not great. But you can kind of figure it out more remotely. But you know, music and theater, you can't really put things together. So it's just been really stressful and just on the social aspect of it, too. You know, like I miss seeing people and I missed my friends. And I think just the scariest thing is like, obviously no one knows what it's going to be over and what that means, kind of what that entails. So I've been like, thinking about like, what if we don't get a senior year? What if we don't get a freshman year of college? And like all of this work, everything that we've done for 12 years, that we've kind of been like looking forward to and like, promise to have for next year? We don't even know if that's in play, and it's just it's just not a good situation for anyone.

GREG: *But with all of the issues surrounding the Covid-19 Corona virus shutdown of schools, there are some positive outcomes on which students can focus as **ALYSSA** and **BRIANA** a senior a Durfee High School explain.*

ALYSSA: Well, I think the assignments going online and classes going online have showed me that there is other ways to doing classes. Often times you only say, Oh, you can only do it this way in person or this way online or whatever the case may be. But I think when it comes to getting creative and doing what we have to do, there are endless amounts of possibilities how a class could be run.

GREG: *ALYSSA hopes that some creative approaches will emerge for use in the future.*

ALYSSA: Well, I think that some positives are that we're learning to be better humans...

BRIANA: More independent...

ALYSSA: ...More independent, more compassionate, more open minded, more mindful of other human beings opposed to what we see online and social media. I feel like we're really learning how to be human again. And that may sound weird because we're plugging and digitally and people say that technology is like the worst thing that could happen to human interaction. However, I feel like we're going to be able to grow close bonds and have human connections again because of this.

GREG: *the students at Needham High School also ponder what the future may look like for them.*

MAGGIE: Like I think it's going to be like. I mean, I hope you go back to school in September. I mean, I think they're going to have to figure something out at some point because they can't keep kids out of school for a year and a half. That's just there's no not feasible for a variety of reasons, like not the least

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of which is, like some low income students need to go to school for food and all sorts of things. So, like, I think they're going to figure something out. But like in other countries, they're doing like kids have to, like, come to school. But they have to, like, wear masks and like their desks or six feet apart, but like or a school doesn't have the capacity to like, Yeah, our school is enough. The capacity to have death six feet apart, so, like it could be kind of strange. I don't really know what it's going to look like.

GREG: *they also recognize there is a great disparity and learning based on economic factors*

SASHA: I live in the neighborhood with a ton of younger kids and they're all sort of playing outside and interacting with each other, which is definitely pretty scary, considering the fact that was first be social distancing. But also these kids really rely on school for that kind of like for the entire education. Obviously everybody realized in school for education. But the environment here somewhere like kids aren't getting that sort of academic stimulus from their parents or their families as much as wealthier kids are. And they're just kind of like left to roam around outside. And it's just kind of sad to see that those kids are missing out so much on that academic opportunities that going to the schools here would offer them.

GREG: **HENRY** *worries what the beginning of his college career may look like. A George Washington University in Washington, D. C.*

HENRY: Missing You know, the first half of my freshman year would obviously not be ideal. One of the things I've always looked forward to about college was really not being in Needham, I guess, no offense to Needham. But I've always just wanted to like, you know, go out, be in a different place, especially with like going to be a GW. With that like city atmosphere was really looking forward to that and saying what like living in an area like that would be So, you know, if I have to take class in my basement until Christmas, that would probably not be great.

GREG: *One of the legendary courses for juniors at Needham High School is AP US History, commonly referred to as APUSH by students. The students laments the inability to finish the course and learn about the most recent occurrences in U. S. History*

SASHA: The thing about APUSH, but I vividly remember sitting in a Starbucks with **SHAYAN** and him asking me what I was excited for junior year. And I just stared at him for a minute and I couldn't come up with an answer. And then later that night, I texted him. I was like, I'm excited for APUSH. I want to finish that class And now we don't get that. And that was like that was my favorite class. I was so passionate, That class. I love it. I love the teacher. I love the content, and I was just so happy to be taking that class, even though it was kind of hell.

HENRY: Post AP test APUSH was actually so chill...

SASHA: I was so excited for that. I know I'm not going to learn about the actual part of history I really was curious about, Like post 1945 all. I really wanted to get to the content, and that's not on the AP exams, so we're not going to learn that.

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GREG: *However, their study of history has certainly taught them they are living in truly historic times and realize the materials they produced today will help those who study history in the future understand what it was like living during a time of a pandemic virus.*

MAGGIE: I mean, I think it's weird that, like, this is all going to be like, hypothetically used as like primary sources in the future, because we're living through a huge moment, their historical event, like all the Tik Toks that you see all like, these funny things that were old and like making this podcast all this thing, all these things that were doing to try to, like, spread information or, like, cope with what's happening are going to like, end up seeing the resource is that in like, ah, 100 years kids are going to be using like on their DBQ's on the APUSH exam for, like 2090 or something, and I just I think that's kind of interesting

SASHA: Our APUSH teacher's making us keep a journal like a primary source journal and, like document our experience at the Covid-19 crisis. So that's pretty interesting. And every time I'm writing in it, I just think about all the times I've had to analyze a primary source of that class and how I hated how it was written...

MAGGIE: ...and how many times I've judged the person

SASHA: ...and I've made it as easy as possible to understand.

GREG: *We hope this podcast has given you useful insights into the lives of students during the Covid-19 Corona virus school shutdown. We thank all the students from UMass Amherst, Bridgewater State University and Durfee and Needham High Schools for joining us on this month's podcast. If you have any comments or questions, feel free to navigate to our website www.jfynet.org. You can also find us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Thank you for joining us. I'm GREG Cunningham. This has been a production of JFYNetWorks*