

For me and my family, the COVID-19 pandemic that characterized 2020 was synonymous with a decline in general motivation that I still feel even three years after the infamous “2 week vacation” first began and America has been largely mask-free for a year or so. Online classes were incredibly poorly managed due to how quickly everything happened: COVID (or coronavirus as we first called it) was making news headlines as it spread in China, then suddenly it was a worldwide phenomenon. COVID hit in February 2020, so even teachers with decades of experience suddenly experienced a drastic shift towards a learning environment unfamiliar to anyone in the middle of an ongoing high school year. As I mentioned, motivation was difficult to maintain in students. Anyone could just turn off their camera and watch a movie during class, and we could just take online quizzes and exams with google open in another tab since it was impossible to regulate this activity. Not even the AP exams could be taken seriously due to the rushed, shoddy form in which they were presented. My brother and I have struggled to maintain the motivation and energy needed for larger school projects after COVID.

One of the more distinct experiences I had during 2020 was the passing of my religion teacher from complications with COVID. I was in the last class he ever taught – it was the last period on a Friday. I remember hearing him coughing – it sounded just like a cold. Before the weekend had even ended, we got an email notifying us of his upcoming funeral, which I attended. In high school, I liked my teachers a lot more than my classmates, so this was particularly meaningful to me.