

The last 7 or so months have been very eventful to say the least. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the US greatly affecting the lives of all 350 million Americans.

I am a high school sophomore in NJ. When COVID-19 first became popularized in early March, I did not think much of it. I thought everything was going to get back to normal soon. I couldn't have been more wrong about that. As we all know, COVID is still an extremely scary thing right now. In my county (Bergen), there are many cases, and they are increasing by large amounts every single day.

On March 15, my school announced that they were going to be closed for two weeks. Then, they announced that they were going online for the next month. Finally, it was announced that school was going to remain virtual until the end of the year. This was extremely surprising at the time. I really thought that school was going to come back in person. However, it was not possible under the NJ COVID guidelines. They could not allow that many people in the building at the same time.

Online school was a difficult adjustment for many students including myself. We were sitting in front of a computer for many hours each day. We were completing all of our assignments and tests online. We were even meeting our friends online. This was a drastic change, and it was under short notice. But, it was required to continue school and allow everyone to be safe. On a positive note, at least we had the opportunity to attend school.

We were connected but through a screen. That was difficult. We lost the sense of togetherness in school. Teachers were teaching off of PowerPoints that were presented in zoom which left little room for students to engage in discussions. Even worse, there was minimal peer-to-peer interaction. However, I tried to think positively as at least I was getting the chance to attend school.

Unfortunately, school is still completely virtual for us. However, there are noticeable improvements to the aforementioned problems. In the future, school should be in person through a hybrid system. This will be better as the students will be safe and we will still be part in person and part online. Hopefully this starts soon.

Using Google Meet and Zoom, teachers are able to make lessons much more interactive by putting students into breakout rooms allowing us to socialize and work together. School is much more enjoyable in its current version than it was after March. However, there could still be some improvement.

Ultimately, I am thankful that the State of NJ is taking so many steps in trying to end the virus as soon and safely as possible. I hope that school can be in person soon. It would be much more fun and enjoyable. Of course, this can only happen if COVID 19 cases reduce which does not seem like the case in the present day!