

THE LOST GENERATION:

Covid-19's lasting effects on junior high students

By Megan Kay Montgomery

It is without a doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic changed life in many ways in the past few years, but for some, the impacts of the pandemic are still lingering today.



These impacts are prevalent among Pleasant Valley Junior High School's students as they still struggle to adjust to the effects of COVID-19, and it is more obvious than ever what kind of long term effects the epidemic has created.

The elementary years of one's academic journey is vital to their maturity and growth as a student and pre-teen. As students grow throughout these vital school years, they are preparing for the challenging shift to junior high. But COVID-19's surprise visit in March of 2020 made this transition even more challenging for incoming seventh graders.



7th grader Tenley Bailey explained how her and her fellow classmates still struggle after their third grade school year

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—Tenley Bailey

was interrupted, and how she is still trying to adapt to the middle school's curriculum. “The interruption made learning hard, and I still struggle with learning because we missed so much.”

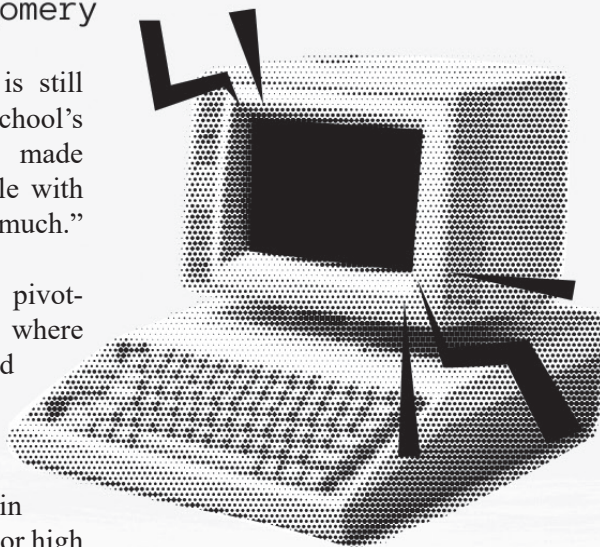
Students like Bailey were at a pivotal moment in their education where students learn study habits and advance their skills in reading and math. But because of the pandemic, students completely missed out on this crucial time in their elementary years. Now, junior high students like Bailey struggle to break the bad habits developed during their pause in schooling, such as excess screen time and problems focusing on schoolwork.

After the COVID pandemic, state-wide standardized test scores decreased. Despite the almost year-long break in which students had little to no normal schooling, they were nevertheless given the same standardized tests upon returning to normalcy.



As a result, students had worse test scores than in previous years, causing more students to be placed in remedial or regular level classes. Classes such as Math 7 and skills and enrichment are becoming the standard placement for incoming seventh graders as opposed to pre-algebra, like in previous years.

Seventh grader Leah Montgomery described skills and enrichment as “a class built like a study hall, but it's for people who need to work on their progress. We work on reading and math problems, then after the mini lessons, we use the rest of the time for them to help us get work done.” But even students who meet the standards are being placed into these classes as a result of test scores that may not accurately represent their learning abilities.



Even though Montgomery's math scores on the ISASPs were standard for a student her age, she was put in an assisted learning math class. Montgomery shared her frustration with her class placement. “I don't like how I'm above the math standards, yet they still put me in what you could call extra help-type classes. And now, getting on the track I deserve to be on is going to be a challenge that I shouldn't have to face.”

With a 100 percent grade and little to no challenge in the class, Montgomery shared that fellow students mock her because of the classes she has been placed in. But it's not just her. There are plenty of students in the exact same position as Bailey and Montgomery.

It is a crucial time in middle schoolers' education as they prepare to enter high school, and students like Bailey and Montgomery worry that the pandemic will have a lasting impact on their education.

Montgomery knows her future tions, “I en out of the skills and enrichment, but because of the curriculum, it's going to be hard for me to jump into the normal classes.”

