

Class of 2021 forgotten amidst pandemic

By Keagen Head

All eyes were on the class of 2020 when an unforgiving COVID-19 pandemic shut down school last spring, abruptly ending their senior year. However, my class, the class of 2021, has been forgotten about.

Not only did the nationwide shut-down in March of 2020 take away the tail end of our junior year, but we've also been stripped of our senior year traditions. It completely changed the two best years of our high school experience.

Because of the pandemic, we lost all of our junior year spring sports, our junior Prom and senior Homecoming dance never happened, we had shortened summer and fall sports last year, all sports have been regulated to fit COVID-19 protocols this year, and the year's not even over yet.

And that's just for after-school ac-

tivities.

Things like rearranging class schedules, sitting at separate tables at lunch, and wearing masks all day are just a few changes to our school-day environment.

On the bright side, the administration decided to have a 2021 Prom. This means that students, like seniors Brias Latimer and Rayne Mangels, will get the chance to have a school dance.

There's a catch, though. The school is mandating that students must wear a mask at all times.

"I think having to wear masks and having people breathing down your neck telling you to put your mask up would take all of the fun out of [Prom]," said Latimer.

It's safe to say that for this year's seniors, there's plenty of things to wish had happened.

Latimer says the one thing he wishes could have happened was the Homecoming dance.

This year, Homecoming week consisted of the parade, dress-up days, coronation, and the varsity volleyball and football games—everything except the dance.

Mangels said the same thing. Not only does she wish her senior Homecoming would have happened, but she also thinks the class of 2021 has been forgotten.

"The class of 2020 lost most of their school year, so of course, everyone's going to remember that year. But when it comes to [the class of 2021], people think it's just another school year," said Mangels.

Actually, despite everything the class of 2021 lost, Latimer still believes the previous class, the class of 2020, had it worse.

Class of 2020 Durant graduate and former *Wildcat Chronicles* sports writer Logan Callison disagrees. He wouldn't trade his year for ours.

"If you think about it, [the class of 2020] had almost a full normal year," said Callison. "We didn't have to wear masks in school... I would say that we had it better than [the class of 2021]."

Unfortunately, everyone's hands are tied, and the only thing to blame here is the pandemic.

Life's not fair, and we understand that. For most of my class, it won't get any easier after high school and into adulthood.

All we ask is that before you dismiss us by saying, "Life's not fair," or "It could be worse," take a second and acknowledge what the class of 2021 has endured and overcome in the face of a pandemic.

55 students take ACT at no charge due to COVID

By Sofia Reyna

Thanks to the hard work of staff member Mrs. Maria Brown, Durant High School juniors took the ACT test in March for free.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, Durant High School offered the ACT test to the junior class, and 55 students took the test at the Durant Community Center spaced out two per table. Pre-packed lunches were handed out to students at the end, and there was no fee at all.

If students were to schedule the ACT on their own, it would cost them \$55 for the no-writing version and \$70 for the version with writing. Mrs. Brown, director of instructor and innovation, spent a whole month preparing for the ACT and helped with budgeting, planning, and providing the test for every junior.

"We're part of an ACT consortium through the AEA [Area Education Agency], so we got discounted prices, and through the consortium, we were allowed to be able to provide it," she said. Not only was the ACT free to students, but so were lunches, which

were passed out to every student who ordered one. However, since more Durant juniors took the ACT at the same time, there is a possibility that overall scores will be lower than previous years.

"There will probably be a dip, but that's okay because then as we work through it and study the data and analyze the data, hopefully we will start improving," said Mrs. Brown.

I asked my fellow juniors about their experience with the ACT this year and how they felt about the change.

Junior Karissa Hoon liked the idea of not having to pay. Additionally, Hoon was okay with the restrictions that had to be taken due to the pandemic.

"Spreading out I think helped because you don't have so many people around you," she said.

However, one of the only things that she didn't like was that the date was already set for her to test.

"If I scheduled it myself, I'd know when I'd have to take it, and I'd probably do a lot more studying than what I did," she said.

Junior Kylie Schult also likes the idea of scheduling the test herself, rather than having someone else do it.

"I'd rather be more prepared," she stated.

Like Hoon, Schult thought that the free price of the ACT was helpful, especially since this was her first time taking it. Yet, she felt as if her mask was a bit distracting but nothing too bad. Junior Patrick Nosler thought that having to take the ACT through the school had its downside as well.

"I would have loved to choose when I could have done it, instead of way early in the morning when I have no choice in the matter," he said.

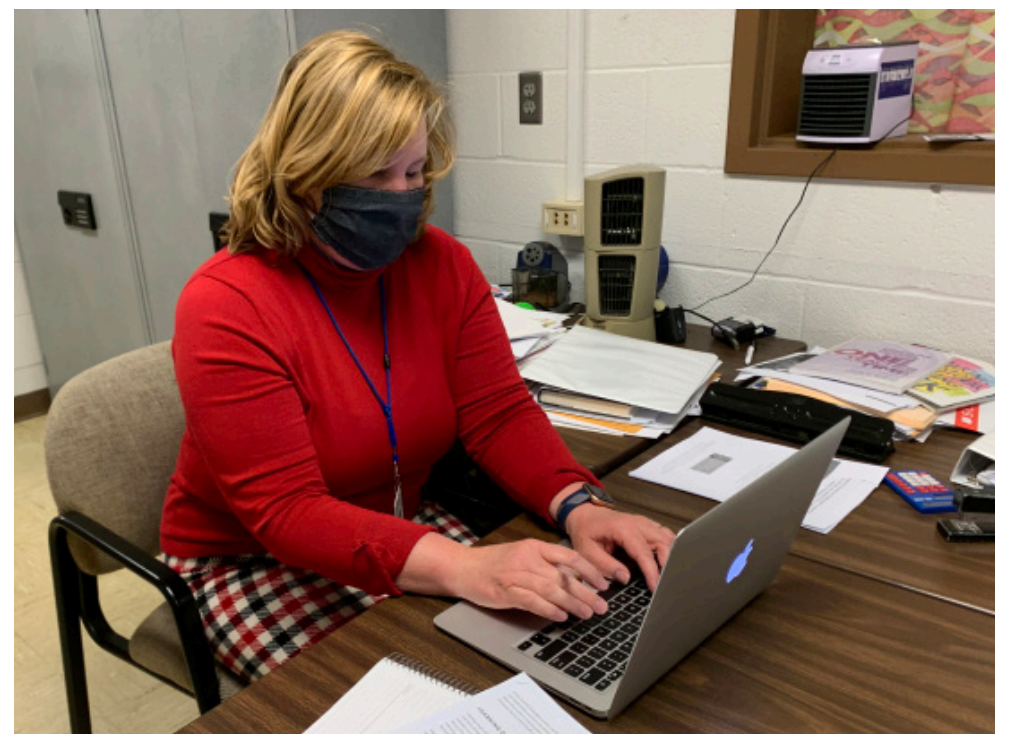


Photo by Nicole Brown

Director of Instruction and Innovation Maria Brown helped organize the ACT test for the junior class last month.

Nosler says that if he had the choice, he wouldn't have taken the ACT at all.

Junior Ethan Woodhouse also said he wouldn't have taken the test and did not like the fact that it was somewhat mandatory. Woodhouse did like that the ACT was free, so he did not have to spend his own money on the test.

Along with planning the ACT test for all juniors, Mrs. Brown helped set up the Edgenuity courses for students learning online and worked over the summer to help find ways for students to stay safe while in school.

Durant Superintendent Joe Burnett has noticed how much Mrs. Brown has done

this school year.

"Mrs. Brown has been amazing, and she has been an integral piece to having a successful school year and an extraordinary time, and I feel really grateful to have her part of our team," he said.

"She's been a liaison between school and home for the students and families that have chosen Edgenuity during the pandemic, and she was very important as far as our return-to-learn plan last summer that we had to put in place, as far as what we were going to do in school, as well as Edgenuity outside of school," stated Mr. Burnett.



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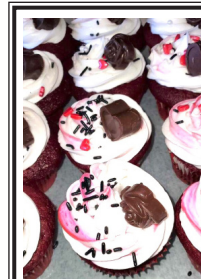
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Michelle Tate

Liberty Trust and Savings Bank's Fine Arts student of the month



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Junior Madison Weber is an alto saxophone player for the Durant Band. She has been playing for six years and started playing because her mother played the same instrument in high school. "I really enjoy learning about all the different instruments and how they can come together to make a beautiful piece," said Weber.



Weber

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