

Stay persistent, keep going, and you're going to get through this!

At the beginning of my ninth grade year, things started differently. I didn't walk into a yard of students and run up to familiar faces as I usually did. Instead, I sat in front of my computer, in a Zoom room. I didn't know anyone except for a few people from my old school, and the excitement of 'meeting new people!' was slowly turning into 'how am I supposed to meet new people?'"

Little did I know, the next few months were going to be quite...an adventure.

One of my goals is to have straight A's, and I knew that my road to that would be much different due to the pandemic. When the year started, I was new to online learning and I was curious to see how it would work out. Before, I had been going to a public school, classes were in person, and we could use things such as lockers and our desks to stay organized. When we had in-person classes, it was easier to ask for help on classwork, too. I could just walk to the teacher's room during homeroom or lunch, usually during homeroom. Now, I can't just walk up to the teacher's desk, and it's harder to reach out in the moment. I miss basically everything in person. You know when you used to run up to your friends and say 'I missed you so much!-' after summer break, on the first day back? Or, sending the 'cya tomorrow!-' text? Yeah, I miss that too. With virtual school, you can't really see or communicate with everyone the same. Something else I miss here and there are teacher jokes. Hearing reactions are so much funnier than listening to a silent, empty, faceless void of squares. But, I was excited for high school because I got into the ones I wanted to. I wasn't expecting, and I don't think anyone was expecting, the way their first year of highschool or college was going to go. In the beginning of online school, I thought I would adjust well. *It shouldn't go on forever, and we'll be back in the building in no time.* So, I just went with it and the beginning was alright. At first, I was new to Canvas. Canvas was a website we were introduced to that organized all of our grades, Zoom links, and assignments. Navigating through it was so unnecessarily confusing, but then I realized I could use different strategies to keep track of important things. I remember reading my schedule, and I figured if I wrote down what class I had on which day, it would be easier to remember. I always had one technique, and that was writing things down. *What assignments do I need to complete today?* I'd write them down with what time I should finish them by. Sometimes, I would finish the work past the time I'd set for myself, and that's okay, because eventually I got better at completing things by a set time. It just takes practice, motivation, and small goals to get there.

Sometimes when I got out of school before my little brother, I would walk past his room and hear him doing his classes too. He also had to transition to online school, and he started fourth grade. Sometimes he runs to my room, asking if I have glue or Play-Doh for an activity he's doing. I'm always wondering how online school is working out for all of the younger kids, do they even have a chance to experience real classes? My younger brother and I went to the same middle school, and I remember my 4th grade year. When he looks back at his 4th grade year, he's going to remember looking at a screen. Many children around the world will not experience the enjoyable years of elementary and middle school, and although virtual learning isn't especially terrible, I feel that everyone should have a chance to experience those years.

Now, let's talk about motivation and procrastination. I feel that many people have had experiences and stories with both of these things. Before finding motivation to complete

something, there's the era of procrastination. I've experienced this, and to find motivation, I start to think about what it would feel like to complete what I need to do. Sometimes I did stay up too late, trying to complete my assignments, and then I would be very tired the next day. I think about this a lot, and it has helped me procrastinate way less, and I've been working harder to reach my goal.

Setting goals isn't easy, and neither is successfully reaching them. For me, this is only the beginning of a long road to reach it. Since the beginning of the year, the tactics I've learned to stay organized and manage my time have been helping me a lot. For other people, I think starting with writing assignments and goals to do will work in the beginning, and they can work towards getting better at managing their time. Also, looking forward to something. You could look forward to making something, reading something, watching something, or playing something. For me, I know that if I continue with staying on top of my game and working towards something, it'll keep me even more motivated. These techniques are going to help me in the future, as well. The future could be tomorrow, or the future could be next week. As I learn more about how to keep everything organized, I know it will help me then. Overall, this year hasn't been easy, but it has definitely helped me learn a lot. I know that if I didn't have this experience, I wouldn't be the same person I am today.

Artist's Statement:

Moving into 2021, we're still doing virtual school. Around the world, scientists are testing a vaccine so we can go back to living normally and going to school normally. My experience with virtual learning, time management, and staying quarantined has been a long journey and still continues even now. This has been going on since March of 2020, and it feels as though I'm writing a documentary on how life has been.

In Trevor Noah's book, *Born a Crime*, he gives a description about several events that have happened throughout his life. He speaks about historical events he has lived through, and I'm doing the same. Some day, I will be reflecting on this, and thinking back to how I, and many others, have lived through this event together. Trevor Noah also speaks a lot about his mother, which stands out to me. When he was talking about his mom on page 55, he says, "The thing that amazed me about her life was that no one showed her. No one chose her. She did it on her own. She found her way through sheer force and will."

Growing up, people *were* there to show and help me in my education so I can work towards my goals. But now, I want to reach my goals through my own sheer determination. I have been working towards these goals by improving my time management and motivation. His mom was a big impact on him, his education, and when he talks about her in his book -- it inspired me a lot. Even in the hard life situations like no transportation or not enough money, she would still make her way through it all with Trevor. Although they weren't as fortunate in terms of money, Trevor was still fortunate enough to go to a better but less progressive school.

When Trevor was going to school, he studied the somewhat diverse groups and who hung out with who in the schoolyard. I remember when I was going to school, I looked around and when people poured into the yard, I almost knew who would go where. It wasn't the same circumstances Trevor Noah was in, but it was similar. Now, virtual learning with Zoom has made

this even more different. You won't know who's going to get along with who, or who will hangout with who. Students all over the world are experiencing virtual learning for the first time and adjusting to it. It is impacting their lives and education, and for some it can be a negative impact--for others, a positive one. Education is a big part of almost everybody's lives, and so many things have changed in the last year. These changes have impacted me and how I will work towards my goals, but either way -- virtual school or not, I'm still working hard to reach them.