Olivia Mashiana

This past year has been crazy. Everything changed so drastically so fast - it was all hard to keep up with. Being in a tiny village where community is everything, it's been hard for everyone to adjust. When our school was closed, teachers had to figure out how to teach effectively from a distance (through trial and error might I add). We have all had to change how we do things and make sacrifices, especially when it comes to attending school.

In my village we have stages of safety. Red, yellow, and green. The red stage is for when we have had an outbreak and it is no longer safe to go to school because of the risk of spreading. Yellow is sort of a "proceed with caution" sign. If we are ever in the yellow stage the school stays extra vigilant about keeping everything we use clean and makes sure that all students are using their masks properly. Finally, the green state is when we have had no outbreaks or no recent cases. We get to have a little bit more freedom with what we do in school and what kind activities the school can put on.

For me personally, I learn much better when I have an actual teacher in person to explain something I don't understand. At the beginning of Covid, I was taking English, Math, History, and Science online. Let me tell you, it was not easy. It was frustrating and discouraging to struggle through an assignment I didn't understand and almost always not get a stellar grade
on. Distance learning has proven to be pretty hard but it's also beneficial. I have learned so much about myself and the way I can learn efficiently and effectively. Like with my online math course, I struggled so much. It was a chore to log on and do it, and for a period of time I stopped doing it altogether. I found myself wanting an actual teacher to come and explain it
to me in person. I went to my parents for help, but just like any other parent that made the "I haven't done this kind of math in almost 15 years. Sorry I don't know how to help " Most of the time I had to just do it on my own, even when I had no idea what I was doing. This has taught me how to have my own back and work through even the toughest things. Now, I understand that sometimes understanding complicated concepts takes time and effort. I've learned these important tools that I can now carry with me into college.

One of the hardest things for me is quarantining. The Unalakleet council came up with protocols we as community members have to follow when traveling. It used to be a mandatory two-week quarantine; it is now a week of quarantine and a covid test after those seven days. If the clinic runs out of tests by the end of your week, you need to stay in for the extra week. I understand how vital it is to stop the spread and keep everyone, including myself, safe. But when I have to quarantine for fourteen days, school moves on without me, and I fall behind. And being at home doing school work is not always the best. You get side tracked, take naps, make food, and forget all about the work you're supposed to be doing. It's hard to take initiative and finish school work. Eventually you get stuck doing a pile of homework the day before you're allowed back in the school.

In recent months, the official Covid-19 vaccine has been administered in our village to anyone who wants it, and things have started looking up. Our school has been talking more about activities that can resume, events like in-person graduation and prom. It is so encouraging to see things slowly but surely shifting back to normal. I know it is not like this everywhere, but I have high hopes that at some point the rest of the states will be in tow. For the following graduating classes, I hope school goes fully back to normal. It has been a good year for growth and change, but it is time things start returning to how they were.