LISD Lowdown

Hello, my name is Taylor Waden, and I am an 8th grader at J.T. Hutchinson Middle School (Hutch). Hutch is part of the International Baccalaureate School Program and each year 8th-grade students are required to complete an IB community service project which involves our community. I have chosen to write an article about the three schools that impact the Tech Terrace Neighborhood and how they have coped with COVID.  Even though we have had to significantly adapt to the way we live and thrive in school, our faculty and staff have made school try and feel as ¨normal¨ as possible.

In 2019 I was a 6th grader at Hutch when the pandemic exploded. I have never had a ¨normal¨ middle school experience, so the 5 month-long spring break we endured was the rest of my 6th-grade year. Coming back in 7th grade was anything but ordinary, everyone was wearing masks, half of us were online, teachers were spraying our hands with hand sanitizer in and out of every class. Fine arts were difficult, to say the least, band class was in the auditorium for most of the first semester, it was hard to sing with masks on in choir, and everyone was spread apart in the auditorium for orchestra. This year, school life is starting to get back to being normal. People are still wearing masks and teachers are still using hand sanitizer, but it doesn’t seem as extreme.

In December, I had the opportunity to visit Roscoe Wilson Elementary School. They were in the middle of setting up for their holiday parties, so my friend and I volunteered to assist them. Roscoe was trying to push as normal of a school year as they could. They had every special day this year as they would any other year with the fall festival, holiday parties, Veteran´s Day, Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom. They are planning to continue with Buddy Field Day as well while being as safe as possible. I was surprised by the amount of older kids who wore masks. I wasn’t shocked that almost every kid under the age of 10 wore one, but the older kids that were able to get the vaccine still wore them on their own. Everything seemed like it was running smoothly the kids from pre-k to 5th grade were all portraying the IB learner attributes like it was second nature and I found that the school had adapted to the pandemic and all of the challenges it brought with it.

Coming back to school as an 8th grader at Hutch this year, I felt more comfortable. Possibly because when I was a 6th grader I had no idea what I was doing and there was a pandemic, in 7th grade everything was weird with not everyone at school and everyone wearing masks. This year though I know my way around the school, know the teachers and my classmates and life is as close to normal as it can be. Though nothing is back to complete normal, fine arts such as band, choir, orchestra, theater, dance, and art have continued with recitals and performances. Musical Theater will be performing High School Musical this year for their final performance. Even though our lives can get crazy at times, our teachers and staff are still always there for us and sometimes will bend over backward to help you if you need it. Middle school has been one of the craziest experiences in my life. Not only with Covid 19, but just middle school in general. However, the amazing faculty, staff, and parents that make Hutchinson Middle School have never stopped trying to care for their students and have always made it a safe place for students.

Recently I interviewed Meridith Kunkle, a counselor at Lubbock High, she informed me that the pandemic has widely affected the school not only the students but the faculty as well. She told me that more students don’t feel motivated to work because of the toll COVID might have had on them and their families. COVID isn’t the only thing that can stop a student from excelling in high school though. I asked her if students still find the “normal” parts of high school challenging, and she informed me that at times students who breezed through elementary school and middle school are finding high school more difficult because they aren’t fully ready for all of the responsibilities and don’t always know how to manage time and classes. She reassured me though that the teachers at Lubbock High have seen this before and are always there to help. One thing that LHS provides is that students have time to bring their grades up to an 80 if they need it and teachers are always there to assist. If students need to come in for tutoring or help on work, the teacher will find time for them. Along with talking to Mrs. Knuckle, I interviewed River Paulk a sophomore at Lubbock High School; he had a lot to say about LHS but what really interested me was how he manages school with sports, extracurricular activities, and life out of school. River Paulk swims competitively for LHS. Along with competing for swim, he takes all AP or Pre Ap classes. He told me it can be a lot of long nights studying and homework in addition to a lot of early mornings for swim, but he also told me that teachers and coaches are always helpful. Coaches know that school comes first because if you aren’t passing you can't play. Teachers are lenient with schoolwork at times because they understand that you have a life outside of school.

Despite Covid 19 and all of the conflict and limitations it has brought, the schools that make up the Tech Terrace community have adapted and thrived. There are many moments in our lives where sometimes it can seem impossible to move forward, adapt, and even flourish, but the schools around us have done just with the help of the faculty and staff, students, and community that makes up our schools. We as a community have adapted and thrived, and we must keep rising above these obstacles.