

Students Perspective on Life in a Pandemic, Indiana

As told by Students from Manchester High School
North Manchester, Indiana

Introduction:

Students from Manchester High School in Indiana worked with the North Manchester Center for History to produce this thoughtful story about how students have been affected by COVID-19. Student speakers include Cade Jones, Trevor Renz, Emily Stambaugh, Jasmine Howard, Frank Roth, Sophia Willey, Alex Sanson, Emma Garriott, Gavin Mize, Kayla Metzger, John Roth, Brock Casper, Josie Briner, Erika Yard, Sarah Holbrock, Morgan Parrett, Asia Snyder, Mitchell Manns, Sheila Winger, Laney Shock, Margaret Myers, Breanna Sprague, Marcus Kral, Jordan Ayres, Madison Parson, Dondre Eades, Aubree Lambert, Taylor Brooks, Luis Gonzalez, Mavern Smith, Harrison Sturtsman, Desteny Sellers, Matthew Linkenhoker. The video was produced by Jesse Gordon.

Story Narrative:

Speaker 1 (00:16): I remember March 13th, when they announced that we were getting closed, I was kind of shocked that it would even happen. I heard stories about other schools getting closed, but I never really thought it would happen at our school specifically. And I remember being at home, doing things online and the immense struggle of it and getting through it and having to find the self-motivation to do it myself was very difficult. And I kind of learned a lot about myself during it, because if I didn't do my jobs or my schoolwork, I would fail, but it was incredibly difficult from doing that at home. So, over the quarantine and over this past year, I really had to learn how to push myself and how to be self-motivated.

Speaker 2 (01:02): I think the thing that changed the most was my attitude towards it. It became something that I had to do to something that I get to do, because this past year I was quarantined just once, so having to do that by yourself and ending junior year, last year by yourself, it's just not the same. And it made me miss the classroom environment, even if the classroom wasn't necessarily filled with my friends, it's just an environment that you have to be in to make school fun and helpful.

Speaker 3 (01:39): The day of our concert last year was when everything shut down and so that definitely had an impact. And then I think also the musical, we were like two weeks away from our opening night and it got canceled, so those were the things that just turned everything upside down for me.

Speaker 4 (01:58): We have shorter classes, longer passing periods, and we have to wear masks a lot. But for me, one of the things that as I look back, I'm like, oh yeah, I missed that, was during passing periods or even in the mornings, just being with friends and hanging out in the, there was kind of a close that was lost when we had all of the COVID precautions put into place.

Speaker 5 (02:34): I think I'll always remember how you need to be thankful for the things that you have because they get taken away so fast. Nobody saw it coming and then when it did, nobody had time to prepare for it. It was just all of a sudden it was here, there wasn't any planning or anything that you could do to prepare. And it just really made you think about the things that you used to be able to do that you couldn't now. And it makes you really be thankful for the things that you have, because you just realize how fast it can go away.

Speaker 6 (03:07): Everybody seems good on their phone. They're a bit more anti-social than they used to be. I don't like that because I like to talk to people. That's just me. That's the only thing really different I've noticed, people were just more antisocial. I didn't like it. Because we were all coming together for one goal and it didn't feel like everybody was kind of doing their own thing during the pandemic, but we all came together, goals to win football games and it was really cool.

Speaker 7 (03:35): I remember thinking very vividly that we weren't going to go home. There were so much rumor mill talking that, oh, school's going to be canceled and then it's all over now. And I just remember thinking of it like a snow day rumor almost, like there's no way that's going to happen. And by midway through the day, it was confirmed that it was going to be our last day of school there, for sure. And I was just shocked and I don't know. I don't remember savoring the day anymore so than I would a normal day, but I definitely just, I don't know. It was very weird. It was a weird day. I don't remember much past being told, that we were officially going home. I think that initial shock was a lot.

Speaker 8 (04:26): Last year when the pandemic hit our track season got canceled, which was a really bummer. And we only got a week of practice in. And then normally during the summer we have basketball stuff and running club and normally we go to tournaments and stuff for basketball and we just couldn't do it this year because of COVID and stuff. So normally I just stayed at home and practiced by myself and didn't get to see my friends at all.

Speaker 9 (04:54): You would have a lot of connecting time with other people and I never had got to have that this year, of course.

Speaker 10 (05:02): Well, I'm an athlete. I only play basketball though. And so things started, the whole second big hit of COVID came around when basketball season started. So for most of our games, I only got just my parents there and my grandparents really never got to come to any because they are older, they're more subject to get it. And we never had a student section or anything. I never got to participate in a student section. So that was, which is something I always look forward to and I look forward to having all the students there. So that was probably the worst for me because it was just so different than, it was just so quiet all the time. And it was just not as enjoyable.

Speaker 11 (05:45): When COVID first started, they canceled the Friday before our last competition. So it was the first year that the winter guard really had a strong show and we were really proud of it and so it was a big bummer to cancel that Saturday, because that was just our last show and it would've closed the season and that wasn't the case. So that season always felt incomplete.

Speaker 12 (06:11): I'm big in FFA and our district leadership contest last year, was canceled the day, it was the day after we got shut down at school. So we missed out on that and my family was on a trip for baseball, so I was stuck at home by myself because of COVID.

Speaker 13 (06:33): Team makers happens at the library here in Manchester. It's something that happened every Wednesday and Thursday, me and a big group of friends would go there on those days. It was extremely fun. I enjoyed it, all my friends enjoyed it, but when COVID hit it just all got changed. It just stopped happening.

Speaker 14 (06:53): When summer comes, that's when you're most active doing lifting, competing with others. And I really like to compete with others. And so the competing part kind of was out because we weren't able to have practice. We also had a new coach come in this year and so trying to learn a whole new playbook was really tough, having two weeks finally, when they said, "Yeah, you're going to play football." And so just that competing part for me was really lost.

Speaker 15 (07:21): I'm involved in everything and so everything got canceled. I lost my track season and county honor band and choir, we had a performance the night that everything got shut down and that was canceled. I lost half my cheer season, my winter cheer season. And I had three camps that I was going to go to during the summer and they all got canceled. And my speech and debate team, which we have here at the school that got canceled as well.

Speaker 15 (07:47): I think I will always remember is the day everything shut down. So we were preparing for our county honor band and choir performance and our performance is actually that night. And we came back to school after our morning rehearsal and we started hearing rumors that school was shutting down and we weren't coming back. And then in the last period of the day, I got an email from my teacher saying it's canceled and we just put in a whole bunch of work and it just didn't work out and we weren't able to do it.

Speaker 16 (08:16): I think it really just hurt because you work hard for both of them, national convention you have to do so many activities and community service projects to get so many points to earn for that. And baseball, you got to go to throwing in the morning with dean, adding practices and it's just kind of like all your hard work thrown down the drain.

Speaker 17 (08:42): We don't get as much family time as I'm sure I would like, we don't get to see grandparents as much and people that are older and that are more at risk for getting COVID. And it really affects making plans with your friends and not being able to see them as much. And like I said, at the retirement home, it's hard to hear them and get close to them and so I just see how it impacts all of them.

Speaker 18 (09:13): My grandfather was in the nursing home last year and because of COVID we couldn't go visit him and he was starting to pass away and all we could do was just sit there and watch. But we did get to go see him one time. We had to all suit up in COVID safe gear and we got to see him. COVID has been mean to everyone.

Speaker 3 (09:37): Residents not being able to get out, see their family, family coming and seeing them and the impact that had. My grandma also has cancer and I couldn't go see her for like two months and standing outside the door and having to wave when dropping stuff off was just really difficult.

Speaker 10 (09:56): Well, I have a really close relationship with my grandparents and other family members and because the vaccine came out just recently, my grandfather has a lot of heart issues and he's just older and so I didn't get to see them really at all. They didn't get to see me do a lot of my milestones you participate in as a senior. And so I think that was just the hardest thing because we couldn't even really have a normal family Christmas or anything like that and it was just really hard.

Speaker 5 (10:30): I think I'll always remember how you need to be thankful for the things that you have because they get taken away so fast. Nobody saw it coming. And then when it did, nobody had time to prepare for it. It all of a sudden it was here, there wasn't any planning or anything that you could do to prepare. And it just really made you think about the things that you used to be able to do that you couldn't now. And it makes you really be thankful for the things that you have because you just realize how fast it can go away.

Speaker 20 (11:01): Being able to spend time more with my family, definitely because with school and work and then once school got quarantined, we got quarantined, we got to spend time with our families and appreciate being with them more, I guess. I think also with how much it's cleaner now, because everything's getting wiped out more and they're focusing, people are focusing more on the clean part of the world and trying to keep it clean, keep it safe for all ages and stuff, I think that is very positive for the world.

Speaker 20 (11:39): You're going to be more mindful of sickness and illness and how important it is and how it affects everyone, no matter what age group you are in or even what health you have already. I think that we're probably going to still social distance and slowly go back to normal. I don't think it's going to be a drastic change. I think that we'll probably just slowly get back to where we were before.

Speaker 21 (12:09): I think the biggest thing for me was how many families were brought together and how many families were torn apart. I've heard so many stories about families getting more time to spend together and how much better it was for them and their siblings and their parents and their grandparents getting to spend that time together because of quarantine. And then I've heard a lot of stories of families being torn apart because of it.

Speaker 11 (12:34): Definitely just everyone's reactions to it, like everyone panicking and being unsure and then transitioning to people fighting and saying fake information being spread and nobody knows what's real. And just the confusion in that surrounded everyone for the entire year of 2020, it's really interesting to watch just how people react and how the politics were involved and yeah, the whole world just changed in a different way.

Speaker 22 (13:11): So we live in Florida and my parents decided that they wanted to move back to family, which was Indiana. But you see, we decided before COVID was, people knew COVID was a thing, but they didn't know that COVID was going to be this big pandemic, illness, virus that would take over. So we expected that it wouldn't be a big thing.

Speaker 22 (13:33): And my mom has always had to work a lot ever since I was born, she was a full-time waitress who took on way too many shifts growing up, just because I was a child and children are expensive. And she went to college and got a degree, which it takes a lot of time because you're a full-time waitress, raising a family plus trying to get a bachelor, a lot of the stuff. And then when once she got her bachelor, she went on and got a big job because we live in Florida, so lots of opportunities there. So she got a job at a law firm and that meant she was gone a lot. And she was always gone a lot since I was born. I didn't really know her, but then when COVID hit jobs, jobs [inaudible 00:14:18], a lot of people lost their jobs or jobs had to be made so they could be able to be worked on from home. And so she was at home and she was stuck at home and that really helped build my relationship with my mother because she was finally home and she wasn't gone all the time.

Speaker 7 (14:38): I've found that I appreciate the relationships that I do have much more and I've become closer to the people that I do want in my life and the people that I didn't need or want in my life or vice versa, have kind of left through all the stress of this past last year.

Speaker 16 (14:58): I think the biggest thing is just canceling, getting that announcement on at school, saying see you in two weeks or whatever. And then getting the call saying we're done for the whole year. I think it was just the all-around mess. And then my dad had a triple organ transplant, so we couldn't give it to him. So going up and seeing him at the hospital, it was hard. And I think it might have been a little harder for our family and for me than most people just because it's like, well you're kind of putting your whole family's life in risk.

Speaker 16 (15:36): I think it was just hard just about learning everything new. And then coming back to school, the lunch line, six feet apart, always wearing mask, always walking the same direction in the hall, which it's a new normal now. It's like not that big a deal.

Speaker 23 (15:57): When you go to school every day and get to see people, and then when we get locked down, you can't see anyone or go anywhere. You just can't really talk to anyone but your family. And it's hard because I like to be social. What has changed the most for me about school is choir. We have to distance and wear masks and it can be hard because you can't really hear anyone around you and you have to sing out. But it's also good because you have to build confidence to sing out.

Speaker 15 (16:28): One thing that I think, and actually hope won't go back to normal, is the cleanliness of people. I think that we've all gotten a bit more conscious about how to be clean and how to be safe around each other. And the social distancing will play in a little bit too because people will realize if I'm sick, my spit travels farther than I think. And they'll tend to stay back and not get other people sick.

Speaker 24 (16:52): I don't think that people's social lives will go back to normal. People have become extremely introverted and I don't see that going back to normal, which is honestly unfortunate for the people who really enjoy social aspects of life. I thrive in a social environment and being around people, but you see that less and less often even coming out of the pandemic.

Speaker 25 (17:18): Well, in the past year, I've had to really consider other people and think about, well I'm not necessarily at risk, but other people's family members might be and things like that. So I've really thought more about other people other than just myself and I think that's actually a good thing because now whenever I'm going out or seeing people, I think, well how can I make them safer? How can I help them feel better about themselves? Even though it's going to put me in an inconvenience.

Speaker 26 (17:52): I feel like it's definitely how I was able to hang out with friends all the time before, during summer, spring break and everything, but when the pandemic came around, obviously we couldn't do that because we had to had social distance. My parents wouldn't let me out because they were scared I would catch COVID. Actually my dad did actually get COVID and he went to the hospital for four weeks, around four weeks or so. So my mom also had to work hard to make up for the money that he gained so we could gain it while he was in the hospital and get treatment for him.

Speaker 26 (18:29): Also, my parents, whenever my friends would try coming to knock on my door to, "Okay, is he allowed to go out?" And my parents would be like, "No, he's not because of the pandemic." And I mean, I couldn't say anything because they were my parents. So yeah.

Speaker 26 (18:44): I feel one of them is also the mask, but we also have to have a mask during passing periods. Also how you can only go one direction at a time and you can't go backwards. So sometimes when my class is right there, I have to walk all the way around just to get to that class, I was like right there. Also the three people per table at lunch, before I would have like eight people at my table, we just talk and mess around. Now we have to pick cap side seats and only three people so they can track if somebody gets COVID.

Speaker 27 (19:20): Been kind of a big change learning how to navigate the world during a pandemic with a compromised immune system. So that was a big change for me. Watch TV shows with them and watch movies and go on walks with them and that's been something that I've really enjoyed.

Speaker 5 (19:40): I think that a lot of the things that won't return to normal is people are enjoying their space and not people being all up close and next to them. I think a lot of people will enjoy just having their bubble of their own area. And a lot of restaurants are advertising that they're cleaning a lot more, when we all thought they were cleaning that much in the first place, so hopefully that will stay the same and they'll continue to keep up the cleanliness.

Speaker 20 (20:10): I think I'll probably remember the impact it had on certain people and the impact it had on businesses and the schools and how it affected our grades and being in quarantine, it made it difficult for people to get back on track when school did start again. It really affected certain business, especially small businesses because all of their business is gone at that point because they rarely have business anyways. And growing businesses, they struggle in general. So with quarantine, it went downhill for them.

Speaker 28 (20:47): It was hard with the ticket policy this year, happening to choose what grandparent could come to what game and why. So that was pretty hard and just having the whole mask thing, it was a battle to remember. So I'd probably say the sports and senior nights and stuff like that.

Speaker 6 (21:09): Disconnection from people, everybody kind of started arguing more, whether it's over politics or whatever they're arguing over, they got nothing better to do, so they went on the internet and started arguing with each other. And it's kind of became different sides of people's opinions and they're just very opinionated and all they want to do is talk about their opinions and not listen to others. And really arguing to me is a waste of time. It could be spent having fun.

Speaker 7 (21:49): I think the biggest change is obviously the people that we've lost and the people that are still suffering from COVID. I think that a lot of people, I think that everyone has at least someone that they know, even a mild acquaintance that has gotten the virus, if not died from it. It's a wake up call almost, for many people. Definitely for me.

Speaker 29 (22:23): I think I'll always remember how people are so unwilling to accommodate for others, take wearing masks, quarantining, staying six feet apart away from each other, people either don't do that because it's uncomfortable or very inconvenient. Well, I think we really need to reconsider ourselves if we value our own comfort over helping people stay alive even. I think people really need to reconsider themselves in that aspect.

Speaker 1 (23:19): Things will feel normal after a while, but I definitely think the thoughts will be lingering in our minds or maybe in a few years we'll be rummaging through our own clothes and we find a mask, be kind of shocked about it.

Speaker 17 (23:32): So I got a job at Peabody at the retirement home and because of that, I get to see how it affects the residents there. And I've really got to build a connection with them because since family can't come in and see them, I'm basically one of the only people that they get to see regularly. And so they just are more than welcome to talk and share stories and just explain things that they've been through. And so hearing those stories from them have been really interesting.

Speaker 30 (24:07): Don't exactly have to go out. I don't have an obligation to go out with my friends exactly. But I know that sounds really mean to them, but sometimes I prefer to just stay at home and then do my thing and I don't feel like I have an obligation or I'm disappointed them if I say I don't want to go out. But that's something that has been positively impacted. But I also think it's given me a lot of time to reflect on myself and what I want to do with myself and so it's good for me in that way.

Speaker 18 (24:45): I just have to say better hygiene in general, more aware of what disease is happening and hopefully anti-vacs won't be as big thing because that's not very safe for anyone. And it also doesn't give children a chance, makes it much harder. So I just have to say we're going to become better at managing diseases and using our resource more wisely.

Speaker 26 (25:14): Last day of school that we had it, they said through the announcements school would be canceled until further notice and well, it never got uncanceled, so we pretty much had the whole break before summer break. And also the e-learning we had to do, it was very hard to do well for me, it was very hard because I was at my house and when I'm at my house, I feel really relaxed and not really in the mood to do any e-learning. So I feel like that's one of the things that you will always remember.

Speaker 9 (25:51): Definitely, it's more of a personal thing for me, but my views on some of my peers, how I thought of them has definitely changed, just seeing them not wanting to be safe and help make sure that we get through this pandemic, they weren't willing to do that. They just wanted to live a normal life, which I wanted to as well, but we had to do what we had to do, but they just weren't doing it. And it definitely changed my view.

Speaker 12 (26:27): Learning a good work ethic. Over the summer I took my mowing passion and started mowing to get some income. And it really just taught me how to make things work and always work around problems. I think that we will always have masks on in public now and largely crowded spaces, just for people to have a peace of mind that they are going to not get sick. It's one thing that people have noticed is wearing the mask they are less likely to get sick or get a cold in large spaces. So I think that's one thing that's going to stick around.

Speaker 14 (27:06): How some people reacted to it. And how, when we first heard about this COVID we were like, "Oh, there's becoming a few cases in the US." And then there was news getting out that there's all these different rumors. And we were saying a whole bunch of stuff before we really knew what COVID was. We were just saying, it's this much spreadable and we have to do this, do this. And everything's changing and the guidelines are constantly changing because we're learning more about it.

Speaker 14 (27:34): I think one of the positives were that I got to spend more time with my family and we would have game nights where we'd sit down and play a few games, do a puzzle or something and it really just brought us together.

Speaker 7 (27:48): Well, blatantly I think it brought up the best and the worst in people.

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