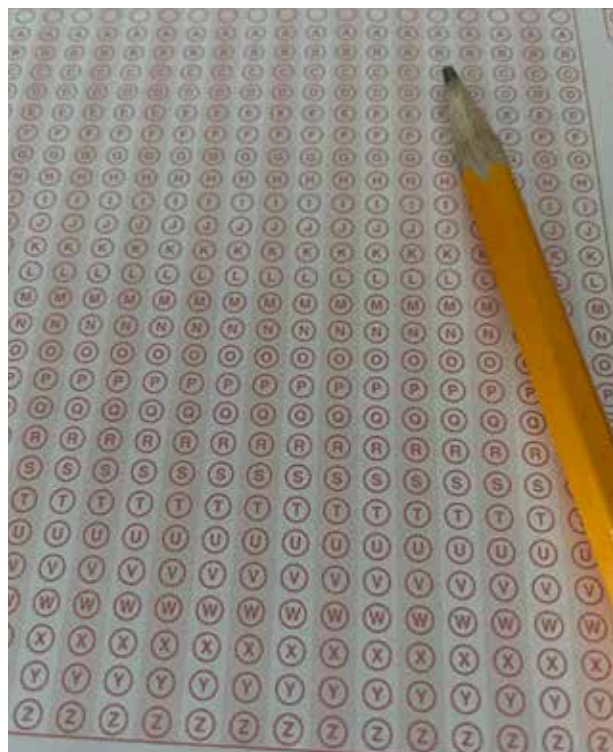


ACT: a necessary evil?

By: Sydney Burlage
@burlage_sydney

As most high schoolers know, in the average year of applying to college the ACT is a must. Yet in this strange year of 2020-2021, the ACT is not required for applications. This brings up the question of if the ACT is actually a necessary evil as it has been claimed to be for so long, or if it is just another hoop that colleges make you jump through before considering you for a spot.

The ACT is a standardized test that has four different multiple-choice sections (Math, Science, English, and Reading) along with an optional writing section. Because it is a standardized test, schools can use it to compare students that apply to their school based on the exact same test. Basically, it is a general look at a person's intelligence level. How then are schools accepting applicants with the same level of consideration and equality if they are missing one of the key indicators in previous years for acceptance?



A pencil waits on a test bubble sheet to be picked up when the test begins.

The simple answer is that they aren't. Whether people see this as a positive or negative really depends on where their strengths lie. With one of the main components of an application gone, the scrutiny falls more heavily

onto the other parts like the letters of recommendation and transcript. For bad test-takers this might just be their golden ticket, but it also takes one of the unbiased, statistic-based

application pieces out of the equation. If students were able to take the test, they are more than welcome to submit their scores, but this once again brings up the fact that the playing field becomes more and more uneven as aspects become optional.

In the grand scheme of things, having the ACT or not can be good or bad purely based on what each individual student's skill set is. I think that each college needs to take a look at the big picture and determine what skills they find more important to their school and make a definitive answer on whether to accept scores or not.

The risk of relaxing

By: Jenna Sackett
@Jenna_Sackett13

Throughout 2020, and now 2021, the world has been living by the new rules and ways of life that COVID-19 has forced us to do. We've altered how we do things that we used to take for granted. The days of smiling at friends during class, sharing a whiteboard marker, and even glaring at the kids who thought it was enjoyable for everyone else to watch them make out in the hallways, are gone. Or at the very least, on a break. One thing that's not on a break is spring break.

This year's spring break is short, March 13-17, including the weekend. Although anything would seem short compared to the 5-month unexpected extension from last year. Even with this short break, people are wanting to make the most of it. But the question is, what can they do? What should they do? Is it safe to go on vacation? Is it worth the risks? Everyone's got an opinion.

For me, I'm willing to take the risk to go on my family vacation this spring. My family talked about it a lot and decided it was important to us. One reason being we will see family from out of state. Obviously traveling right now is dangerous, but everything has a risk. It's about weighing out the pros and cons of taking that risk. For families like mine, we have no preexisting health conditions that make us more susceptible to COVID-19. We are all relatively healthy, and fairly young. We'll be extra cautious, wear masks when around people, sanitize, and keep our distance, which will make the chances of getting sick or spreading sickness, significantly less. For us, we want to see our family, and I want to see my little cousin. Every time we check Facebook she seems to be growing up faster and faster.

We are in the midst of a global pandemic. We have been for a year now. We take chances with get-



Jenna Sackett, senior, and her sister Haley visit Chestnut Mountain on a day trip last fall while following safety guidelines.

ting sick every time we go to school, the grocery store, or see our friends. You've got to tread the line of staying safe and actually enjoying life. At the beginning of quarantine, when there was no school, many people weren't even seeing their friends. For months, that seemed like years, they were alone or only with the people from their homes. Many watched their mental health spiral as the life they knew was stolen from them and ripped apart in front of their eyes. The mention of normalcy seemed like a cruel joke.

Things certainly aren't back to normal, and maybe the old normal will never be back, but the world is more open. We know a little bit more about this virus now. Some may argue that going on vacation at a time like this is stupid and selfish. But it's not. We just want to experience life. No one really knows how much time we have on this earth, and if this virus has taught me anything it's that I need to live my life and stop hesitating. Everything could be gone tomorrow. It's important to enjoy every moment you get.

So if you're able, and not immunocompromised or have another complication, you've gotta try to live the life you've got. Don't go out without masks on and share straws, chapstick, or anything, but enjoy the fact that after everything 2020 threw at you, you are still alive. Act like it (safely).

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