

YELLOW POD PRESS

By Harlan Bielagus

Life in Yellow Pod

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Life in Yellow Pod is very different from last year, or really any year at SMS. Now the grades are split into Pods. (Replacing Homerooms. We have Homebases, and instead of everyone at school, approximately one out of four kids are remote learning. Some classes are outside, along with lunch and recess. Almost all of our work is digital. Face masks are mandatory, and hand sanitizer is abundant.

School has really changed, but not necessarily for the worse. The district is making the best out of a difficult situation, and there are some things that actually seem to be running smoother than in regular school. However, to understand the changes, you must understand how school actually is right now.

To begin with, there are five Pods; Blue Pod, Green Pod, Purple Pod, Red Pod, and Yellow Pod. Each grade is divided into the Pods, so only a fifth of each grade is in each Pod. Within each Pod there is one Math, Reading, Writing, Science, and Social Studies teacher. There are also two specials that stay with the Pod for a Trimester, and then they cycle out, and another two specials come in. The Pod itself is like a mini-school, with people from 5th grade to 8th grade and all the core teachers. The only difference is that, let's say the math teacher, is not just teaching one grade of math. That teacher is teaching *all* four grades math. It does put more strain on the teachers, but it is a very good idea for keeping kids and teachers safe. This is because other than the special teachers, no kids or teachers are really seeing other people from other Pods. The plan in place is that if a student is positive with Covid-19, instead of the entire school going remote for two weeks, only the Pod with the sick student would quarantine. Luckily, this has not happened yet.

Now, Life in Yellow Pod: To start off the day my dad drives me to school. There is usually an ample line, but after a few minutes, my car is up on the hill and I can walk down to the Yellow Pod entrance. The Yellow Pod entrance is the side door next to the S.A.U. driveway. Two SMS staff stand at the entrance. They take your temperature, and ask you the Covid-19 symptom questions, and after getting some hand sanitizer, you are allowed to walk inside.

Inside the building, I walk to my Advisory, and depending on the weather we go to our "Rain Room" and Advisory takes place there. If the weather is good and the tents are up we go outside. In Advisory we talk about setting goals, how the school year is going, and how to stop bullying. My advisor is Mrs. Austin, and she is super kind and enthusiastic. As Advisory comes to an end, Mrs. Russel, my Intervention teacher comes, and we switch to Intervention. In Intervention we work on catching up on work, and if we are all caught up we can read or play math games. At the end of Intervention, we go inside, grab our bags, meet up with the rest of the 6th graders, and head outside and around the school to Mrs. Russel's Art room. In Art we have learned about color blending, and how to draw three dimensional shapes. We have drawn a 3-D Robot, and a fantasy creature that must have at least three different body parts of different animals.

At 9:03 A.M., Art ends, we walk down the hall to IAT (Industrial Arts). There Mr. Hammett greets us and we sit down at the work tables. Mr. Hammett made some plastic work

bench dividers, so the classroom is a little more safe. In IAT Mr. Hammett has shown us how to sand with fifty grit sandpaper (the amount of grit determines how fine the sand is, the higher the grit, the finer the sand).

When IAT ends, we head back around the school to the 6th grade homebase, where Mrs. Kilban, our Math teacher, meets us, and we join the Zoom call. In math we have reviewed long division and fractions, and now we are learning about rates, ratios, and comparing numbers. Mrs. Austin also comes in, and other than brightening the mood, she helps kids individually while Mrs. Kilban is teaching the class.

Next comes Science, and Mrs. Brezovec comes into our homebase. Mrs. Bezovec has taught us how to conduct an experiment and how to use Google Sheets. We reviewed the scientific method, and did multiple activities with it. Everyday we record the temperature, and now we are studying the atmosphere.

At the end of science, everyone grabs their lunches and their crates, and we line up for lunch and recess. When we go outside we can sit on the grass with our masks off, but we must be at least eight feet apart. After twenty five minutes of lunch, Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Kilban come out with hula-hoops, recess balls, tennis balls, and a soccer ball. Masks must be worn, but other than that, kids are allowed to play together for another twenty five minutes. When recess is over, we grab our crates, sanitize, and walk back into the building.

Mrs. Hayes meets us in our homebase, for Social Studies, and we get on to Google Classroom to answer the question of the day. At this point in Social Studies we have learned about longitude and latitude, geography in general, physical and human features, and the country of Canada. We also studied government briefly. There was also a special unit on the Presidential election, when that happened.

When Mrs. Hayes leaves, Mrs. Baker comes in, we either read or write for ten minutes. After that, she teaches us about antagonists and protagonists, plot mountains, and different types of writing. We just finished a science fiction unit where we watched and read Rad Bradbury's *All Summer In a Day*, about a new human civilization on Venus, where it rains constantly, save for two hours every seven years. Around 2:05 or 2:10 Mrs. Baker ends class and we pack up our bags. Then we all go out into the hall and wait for dismissal. While waiting in the hall, students stand on the yellow Xs to maintain six feet of distance. Yellow Pod is usually dismissed first, and when we are, parents pick up and walkers exit the building, closely followed by students riding the bus. Parent pick up kids are led by Mrs. Brezovec up the hill to the back parking lot, where they wait under the tents to be picked up. Bus kids walk around SMS to the front entrance, and hop on their bus. In the buses masks must be worn at all times, and the windows are open. It is one kid to a seat, to limit physical touching.

Meanwhile in the school, teachers and janitors sanitize everything, and get ready for the next day. At this point, there aren't any after school activities, so kids just head home. All in all, SMS is doing a great job to keep kids safe and happy, even in these uncharted times. So, whether you are Zooming into your classes from your couch, or you are getting up early to have some breakfast before jumping on the bus, school has changed, but our education has not. I just want to give a quick thanks to all the ConVal staff that are going to great measures to keep us safe, learning, and happy. This is a look into Yellow Pod from Harlan Bielagus.