

As graduation nears, students look forward to celebrating what they can celebrate

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Revere High School seniors (from left) Rose Burns, Brianna Senecal and twin sisters and senior class officers Kathy and Astrid Umanzor chat during a socially distanced meeting in the school's parking lot as they try to figure out what their prom and graduation will look like this second year of the pandemic in Revere, Massachusetts, April 22, 2020. In nearby Newton, Massachusetts, students are having an outdoor prom. Photo: Jessica Rinaldi/The Boston Globe/Getty Images

The class of 2021 at Newton North High School in Newton, Massachusetts, is making the most of this year. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, some people are working to keep students connected and traditions alive.

Aaron Sanders Jr. is an administrator at Newton North High School, and he has known many of the Newton North students for years. Recently, he has been working with class leadership officers to put together fun events. His hope is that students have a sense of normalcy.

"We meet to talk about different activities to keep the class united," Sanders said.

Kevin Wu is the student body president. He and other student leaders have worked to put on safe events that could keep the senior class connected. They hosted a free movie night and a kickball tournament.

Wu said the student council used to focus on raising funds, but that has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There's really been a shift to run events that bring people together rather than just focused on what's financially best," Wu said.

Outside Prom Planned

Newton North is going to have an outdoor, in-person prom for the class of 2021. The celebration will take place on a field with COVID-19 safety rules.

Some students said this prom is not what they expected, but they're grateful.

"I think to some extent we all didn't think we were going to have a prom; then when we found out we would, it was a pleasant surprise," said Sara Sales, a senior. "I think everyone's pretty happy just to have the opportunity to be able to participate in an event like that, and bring everyone together."

Ellie Solomon, another senior, said she is excited. She is eager to dress up, take pictures and connect with friends, especially because the school did not have a prom in 2020. The spread of the coronavirus led to many event cancellations, and classes were often held online.

Sanders said the class of 2021 has done well adapting to the current climate. Even though this is not what they expected back in freshman year, "the students have persevered," Sanders said. "We're doing the best we can and we look forward to celebrating what we can celebrate at the end of the year and enjoying every minute of it."

"We've Gone Through A Crazy Year"

Graduation and prom symbolize an end for seniors, but Sales thinks her class is ready.

"I feel like everyone's just ready to graduate to some extent," Sales said. "We've gone through a crazy year, and I think we're all sort of ready to just move on and go to college at this point."

Sanders and Wu said students of the class of 2021 should be proud of what they have gone through.

As one of Wu's teachers said to him, "The class of 2021 all across the country will come away from this experience a lot stronger."

Quiz

1 Read the following statement.

Seniors at Newton North High School think an outdoor prom is a good idea.

Which sentence from the article provides the BEST support for the above statement?

- (A) Aaron Sanders Jr. is an administrator at Newton North High School, and he has known many of the Newton North students for years.
- (B) "I think everyone's pretty happy just to have the opportunity to be able to participate in an event like that, and bring everyone together."
- (C) "We've gone through a crazy year, and I think we're all sort of ready to just move on and go to college at this point."
- (D) As one of Wu's teachers said to him, "The class of 2021 all across the country will come away from this experience a lot stronger."

2 Read the following sentences from the article.

1. *His hope is that students have a sense of normalcy.*
2. *Newton North is going to have an outdoor, in-person prom for the class of 2021.*
3. *Sanders said the class of 2021 has done well adapting to the current climate.*
4. *"I feel like everyone's just ready to graduate to some extent," Sales said.*

Which two sentences taken together provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that the Newton North High School student leaders are creative?

- (A) 1 and 2
- (B) 2 and 3
- (C) 3 and 4
- (D) 1 and 4

3 HOW did COVID-19 affect Newton North High School's student council?

- (A) They became upset at their school's principal for not letting them host in-person events.
- (B) They stopped meeting when classes switched to online and the assistant principal took over event planning.
- (C) They added additional members to the leadership group to think of better solutions to problems.
- (D) They switched from mostly events that raised money to events that would make students feel connected.

4 WHY did a Newton North High School teacher say the class of 2021 has grown stronger?

- (A) They had to learn to use new technology when school moved from in-person to online, providing them with important skills they will use later in life.
- (B) They have had more free time to use for studying and applying to colleges since they could not socialize with friends as often.
- (C) They have gone through unique and difficult experiences that made their high school years different from what they expected, but they adapted.
- (D) They were able to complete one year's worth of school work in half the amount of time due to an increased focus on academics.