

The Writer's Block

Issue One - New Beginnings



FEATURING

Transitioning Grades during
COVID-19

Upper School's Thoughts on a
Cohorted Year

A Letter to our Homebodies

SEC Profiles: Co-Heads of
Council

*"Don't get it right,
get it writ."*

- Mr. Sylvester

Editor's Note: Why Writer's Block? Why Now?



Where to start? *Not here, that is no good.* These words? *No, we need the right ones.* Once Upon... *This is the student newspaper, Emiko!*

Writing this note, I fell into the trap of a blank page and aimed for perfection. Writer's block became border patrol and allowed only the highest-reaching words to be made real through my fingers; no vaulting letters cleared that high bar.

No writing is ever perfect; what was I afraid of? I told myself that I had come down with a rough case of writer's block, but I knew the truth: I was censoring myself, aiming for an arbitrary standard.

But this year, we are overruling this concept, rewriting the narrative. Writer's block will no longer stand in the way of our scribbling. To the Bayview Glen Upper School, *The Writer's Block* is a platform to house student opinions, voices, and stories; it is our student newspaper. Instead of plugging the flow of ideas, the title will encourage students to celebrate the imperfect draft and unite over a shared love for words.

We are studying in a changing environment, and it can be difficult to write about emotional and current topics. As we brainstormed articles, COVID-19 was discussed in detail. The team agreed that addressing the present situation could play an important role in establishing community and fighting feelings of isolation. Though the pandemic is challenging to write about, the team has done so, in the hopes of aptly representing the school's feelings about our current situation. We are *not* alone.

I think they have done a brilliant job. Thanks is also owed to our team of editors and graphic designers, as well as the various teachers who have supported this paper. If this publication is a symbol, let it be one of gratitude.

But thanks do not make that initial draft any less pesky. I urge you to throw away your worries; there is no grade and little pressure within our student newspaper. "Don't get it right," Mr. Sylvester, our teacher-supervisor tells us, "get it writ."

And so we did; enjoy this first issue of *The Writer's Block*.

Hugs,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emiko', with a long, flowing underline.

Emiko Wijesundera

Editor-In-Chief

Want to contribute to *The Writer's Block*? Write a *Letter to the Editor*, addressed to ewijeysundera@bayviewglen.ca, to be included!

The Strange Transition Between Grades During a Global Pandemic with Christian



The Strange Transition
Between Grades in a
Global Pandemic

[Read More](#)

Unusual, Moderated, Unproductive, Distant: Each Grade's Thoughts on the New School Year with Constantine



A New School

[Read More](#)

A Letter to our Homebodies



Dear Cohort O,

[Read More](#)

SEC Profiles: the Co-Heads of Council with Anavi

In this Issue

The Strange Transition Between Grades During a Global Pandemic with Christian

Unusual, Moderated, Unproductive, Distant: Each Grade's Thoughts on the New School Year with Constantine

A Letter to our Homebodies

SEC Profiles: the Co-Heads of Council with Anavi

Upcoming Events



Student Leaders, Unmasked

[Read More](#)

Between the Lines



Anavi has been writing since she was a child and uses it as an outlet to de-stress. She hopes her last year will go out with a bang.

Hi everyone! My name is Anavi; you may remember me from the Bayview Glen Student Anthology: *Between the Lines*. I loved reading all your work last year and I'm happy to announce that the anthology will be continued this year as well...although in a slightly different format.

Between the Lines has merged with our student newspaper *Writer's Block*, which is an exciting new venture in Bayview Glen. I'm sure you're all as thrilled about this as I am. The newspaper will publish new editions each month, featuring everything you need to know about student life at Bayview Glen.

Of most interest to you, *Between the Lines* submitters, the newspaper will also have a prompt for the anthology, which will be due by November 15, 2020. Depending on the amount of submissions, some pieces may or may not be published. You can find the prompt in the previous edition of the newspaper and on the *Between the Lines* Edsby group. Until then, keep your eyes peeled and enjoy the other incredible segments from the newspaper team.

Happy writing!

Your first prompt is Halloween themed: Write a one-page murder mystery, complete with a beginning, middle, and end. And please, let's not get too gory.

OR

Take an object/idea/place that would not usually be associated with Halloween, and put a spooky spin on it. This should also be one page in length.

Age 2 to University Entrance | Co-educational | Multicultural | Multi-Denominational | IG: @bayviewglen_toronto

The Strange Transition Between Grades During a Global Pandemic with Christian



The Strange Transition Between Grades in a Global Pandemic

Christian is a grade 12 student who is looking to have a great final year! He adores writing, specifically creative writing.

My body slammed into a wall of relief, having finally returned to my home. I did not care about the masks on faces, nor the designated entrance routes, nor the social distancing. Any resemblance of normalcy gave me a feeling of raw satisfaction. I was just so glad to be off my computer screen and back on campus.

On that first day, I ventured off onto the back deck while the leaves on the trees shifted to warmer colours. I took a seat at one of the picnic benches, a light jacket covering me, and enjoyed the calming ambiance. Even now, over a month into the school year, that on-campus feeling of satisfaction remains with me. Although I enjoy being online, with the overwhelming transition from Grade 11 to 12, being in the building is a small victory. Connecting and growing alongside our peers is one of the many great pleasures of the school year.

Changing to a system attempting to cope with a pandemic can be frustrating, especially for those of us in our final year at Bayview Glen. Change was not necessarily welcome; many of us had a specific idea of what this year was supposed to feel like. This is absolutely not it. Several events that are held annually at Bayview Glen will most likely not be taking place, which is a disappointment. Lockdown has been a period of loneliness for many, if not all of us, and even though we have briefly been given the opportunity to bond with someone in-person again, it is not the same. We all acknowledge this. Depending on how the province decides to handle our recent increase in Covid-19 cases, we may be heading into another lockdown for a brief time. This means that any time we can spend on campus is time we must treasure.

When thinking about how school life has changed from Grade 11 to 12, there are more factors than simply adjusting to Covid-19. Some of these factors are positive, and some of them are negative. First of all, the grade can unanimously agree that the workload has become heavier, due to both the semestered system and the natural characteristics of Grade 12. But I suppose that this is something we all expected. It is important that we treat this year as one of true connection and bonding, despite social limitations. It is also important to find other ways that we can all connect, namely online activities. Joining clubs and extracurricular events is a great way to connect with people that you would not otherwise connect with. I know I have been chatting and connecting with people that I have not been regularly before. If there is any year to become closer with the people in your grade, it is a year in which we have been slightly disconnected.

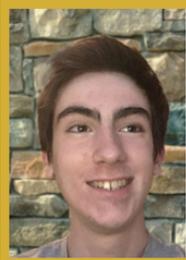
Yes, the transition through grades has been stressful for many of us, especially due to radically changed circumstances. But that does not mean we cannot have a fantastic and satisfying school year. We will have to make do with the hybrid model of online and on campus, and even if we return to a system that is purely online, I see no reason why we cannot still enjoy ourselves.

All of us were thrown off guard due the pandemic. But humans have a miraculous ability to adapt quickly to new circumstances in their lives. That is exactly what we need to do; adapt, and live.

Newsletters Referencing this Item

INDEPENDENT : SCHOOL

Unusual, Moderated, Unproductive, Distant: Each Grade's Thoughts on the New School Year with Constantine



A New School

Constantine is a Grade 10 student, and an admirer of the written word. He can be found writing poems or spinning tales no matter the place or time.

Among all the sectors of the world overturned by the COVID-19 pandemic, the educational sphere was hit the hardest. Classrooms were abandoned overnight and online video platforms were adopted almost instantly as the main medium for learning. This September, schools started to open their doors again, allowing students in for the first time in six months. It is a far cry from the school we knew last year. Everybody must wear masks indoors, remain two metres apart, and avoid physical contact with anybody. The student body is divided in two, neither side able to cross the rift and meet in person. This has all taken its toll on students. In the following pieces, one student from each Grade has been interviewed on their feelings about our new school and how it has affected them. The students remain anonymous.

UNUSUAL

BACK TO
TOP

“I think that BVG did a very good job to make the school year actually happen,” were the first words that came out of 9’s mouth when asked about his thoughts on the new school system. 9, unlike some others, is not disheartened by this year. He feels “comfortable” in the cohorts, online and at school. Unlike last year’s third term, he feels like he is actually in class when learning from home.

The teacher always responds to his questions, and when the cameras are unshuttered, 9 feels fully immersed in the school environment. His only grudge with online learning is how hard it is to hear the teacher at times.

Coming from the Prep School, 9 has been dropped into a surging river with double the normal work. Surprisingly, 9 has easily adapted to the increased workload and system. Although “it’s a bit unbalanced,” he has been coping well. The one class that he is having issues with is Phys. Ed., because of the physical nature of the course. When at home, 9 watches workout videos from the teacher and has to go through the exercises alone. The whole class is separated from each other for 2 or 3 hours, doing independent workouts. “Unfortunately, we gotta watch these videos and do them.” With that resigned admission, 9’s face deflated into the sad smile of defeat.

9, though managing the workload and new stressors in his life, still has some frustrations. He would have preferred to have a full eight-class-schedule, rather than the semestered four we run now. There would be much less work to do, and for someone new to the Upper School, completing 10 months’ worth of work in 4 is challenging, no matter how versatile or studious the student is.

9 did reflect that his time management skills have improved tremendously. In the Prep School, 9 used to leave his work for after soccer practice, but now, with less co-curriculars and double the work, he has had to get a lot better, a lot faster.

For 9, the new school system has been manageable, but it has taken tolls on him as it has on everyone else. “Passing through the halls, you wanna say hi and high five, but you gotta keep in mind there’s a risk of getting a virus.” He is not even sure that the second wave will reach its crest this year, but even if it does, he believes the restrictions will remain in place. He keenly feels the loss of Spirit Day, and all the other new Upper School-exclusive events he was looking forward to experiencing. For 9, the school year hasn’t been the

fun splash into high school he was expecting, and it's not going to improve any time soon.

MODERATED

10 has had to make countless sacrifices this year. Her pre-pandemic plans were full of excitement with sports, bands, clubs, and other activities all in her itinerary. Now, they're all lying dead under the chopping block of concession. In music class, 10 is not able to play in a band. Instead, she has to record tests at home and submit them for grading. "Being able to be together... is much more fun." In her sports career at Bayview Glen, 10 has met other people from other grades and formed friendships that she would never have had the chance to if she hadn't joined any teams. Now that they have been cancelled, that chance has been eliminated. Clubs like DECA and HOSA have gone virtual, she acknowledges, but with all the restrictions and rules, they're not as fun as they were last year. Even in class, her activities are restrained. In Phys. Ed., for example, there's no basketball or soccer, and everyone needs to be six feet apart. "You can't do anything without being scared."

10's other classes have also turned sour. They are more compressed, with ten months of material stuffed into four like an entire wardrobe crammed into an undersized suitcase. Just last week, she had a unit test in math, and the next unit test was the following week. It is a lot more stressful, with two lessons in one class and extra homework. There is only a week to learn a concept, rather than a month. Overall, it's "a bit overwhelming."

The social aspect of the new system isn't ideal for 10 either. Many of her friends are in the opposite cohort. She hasn't been able to see some of her friends since March, and even though she can still meet while being 2 metres apart, it lacks the same sense of togetherness of bygone days. She has been still communicating with her other-cohorted friends, and is starting to get used to the smaller number of people.

Despite all the sacrifices and unpleasanties, the situation has gifted 10 with some benefits and improvements. With all the extra time granted by the new system, 10 has started reading books again, something she wouldn't have been able to do had she been spending all her time at school. Her writing has also improved due to the larger number of ISPs and projects that have replaced many tests. She has also realized how much bacteria there is in

the world and in her environment, and she has become more aware of that; something that will definitely serve her well in the future.

10 has not experienced the fun, active year she was hoping for, but then again, nobody has. We have all had to sacrifice something, and it has taken everyone time to resign ourselves to the new conditions. 10 is hoping that the situation will improve in the near future, and that we will all be able to go back to normal as soon as possible. Until then, she—and we—will have to continue to sacrifice to make ends meet.

UNPRODUCTIVE

11 is disappointed with this school year. His classes are too long, he misses sports and other co-curriculars, and the cohorts are icing over friendships. He knows that the school is doing everything it can to ensure a safe, productive and good year, but “it’s just not the same.”

A few years ago, 11 attended a different school with classes of 50 minutes. He found that to be the perfect length, allowing for focus and productivity. When he landed in Bayview Glen two years ago, he found the 80-minute classes a problem. Now, with the semestered system, periods have been doubled, and it is a struggle for 11 to pay attention for such long periods of time. Approximately 2 hours into the class, everyone starts getting distracted, the work dying on the tracks. 11 admits that “the teachers have been good at giving breaks,” which is something to be thankful for.

Another positive for 11 is his workload. With only three courses this semester, 11 finds himself with less homework and more free time. He hasn’t been feeling the burn like some others, thanks to the spare period. Next semester, though, 11 has a full timetable with four courses. “I’m going to have some problems in semester two.”

11 would have a full schedule with 8 classes—and normal class times—if it were up to him. He knows, though, that this isn’t possible with the cohorts and the need for separation.

11 knows the cohorts to be a good idea, but he still feels the pain that they inadvertently inflict. His group of friends has been split in two, and the two sides have not communicated as much, tearing a rift through their bond. In one extreme case, he hasn’t been able to see one of his friends for six

months. The chance of an in-person meeting has not been kind enough to manifest itself, and it does not seem likely to soften in the future.

11 has been able to wring some benefits out of the current situation. He's been able to improve his time management skills tremendously with the increased workload. He has had to become more organized to deal with the new system, no longer able to coast along the surface of routine and do what he always does. It has forced him to reevaluate himself and come up with new systems for work and balance.

11 is optimistic for the future of the school, and the pandemic in general. "We've already figured so much out." He believes that even if we don't manufacture a vaccine, we can definitely try to live as normal lives as possible. While the current school system is far from ideal, 11's outlook is tinged with hope, and his vision of the future, if not bright, is at least lit.

DISTANT

For 12, this school year is a disappointing shadow of what her last year at school should have been. In the senior year, there is supposed to be a sense of community, a tight-knit bond you all share, knowing that this is the last year you get to spend together before you say goodbye forever.

The twelfth grade, like the rest of the school, is divided into two different cohorts, both unable to see each other in person. Despite feeling separated from half of her graduating class, 12 has found some upsides to the situation. It has given her a lot of freedom to get to know others she usually doesn't spend time with. New friendships will be forged out of necessity and proximity this year. In her words, the cohort system also allows for a more "intimate environment that you wouldn't get if the whole grade was together."

The separation from her friends is the worst part of the experience, 12 says. She does not have trouble dealing with the extra work. 12 feels like her classes aren't longer per se, but are just two regular classes back-to-back. While the fact remains that there is a lot more homework, the reduced number of courses balances that out.

With the extra work and restrictions, 12's schedule has been whittled down thin. Many things were taken out of her daily routine, especially sports; 12 finds herself spending a lot less time being active than before. School used to be her go-to for activities like basketball, but now "I have to look for it on

my own.” She was looking forward to doing many other things outside the classroom in her final year, but they were all cancelled, and the outlook for future possibilities is not looking hopeful. She was also hoping to run for an SEC position, but the one she was vying for was cut. Grad events, Fall Fest, dances, and more. All gone. She misses the feeling of the whole school coming together, and the sense of community that came with a unified crowd. She feels like this year was “cut short” of what it should have been.

Despite all the unwelcome changes, the new system has had some silver linings. 12 found that she has become more diligent. She now is managing her time more independently than she would have had she had teacher support. Her focus has improved in class—while online, self regulation is key—and she has learned, through recent experience, her own strengths and learning style. She has discovered that using apps to limit screen time, taking breaks, and drinking more water helps to boost her productivity.

Additionally, a bonus 12 did not expect was more time for herself and work, with many things dropped from her schedule, like sports teams and the commute to school.

The new school has 12 feeling distanced, cut off from half her grade, and let down by her final year. With the little consolation there is removed, her graduating year is not the fun-filled, exciting celebration it was supposed to be. She doesn’t feel the tight-knit bond of a graduating class, despite the many FaceTimes and Zoom chats they all have. For 12, she has to move through her final year at school on her own, with half her friends, and “it’s just not the same.”

Newsletters Referencing this Item

- The Writer’s Block | Issue #1 (11/06/2020)

Bayview Glen Independent School 275 Duncan Mill Road Toronto, Ontario M3B 3H9 416.443.1030



BACK TO
TOP

A Letter to our Homebodies



Dear Cohort O,

Emiko is in the basement this year, as a grade 12 student. She loves hearing stories and spends her spare time trying to find them in unusual places.

I've missed you. Nothing seems the same; no morning crowds, spilled coffee, or lunch break gossip. My stairways once felt stuffed; people spilling out of every door like wind escaping through the holes of a flute. Now, like a tube of toothpaste past its prime, I find myself longing to squeeze just one visitor from floor to floor. It seems so lonely.

They used to praise my spaciousness, and these compliments plus the HVAC would warm me all over. There have been complaints about my temper, I know; when I get fired up my rooms can get quite heated. Is that why you've left?

Or perhaps it's the opposite; I've been known to give the occasional cold shoulder.

But understand, it is not easy being a school. I rarely get a handful of daylight alone; it is only when the nightlights from apartments across the field squint through the trees and the 401 slows to a bare buzz, that I get any time for self-reflection.

And I have been reflecting, Cohort O. I used to pride myself at having room to grow: enough space to cradle you all... and all of your high school dreams. "Raise the flag," I would say, "I am ready."

So perhaps you've had a real spurt, Cohort O. And perhaps I couldn't keep up. Or perhaps the fault all lies with me. Is this what growing up is like? Losing space for the people you love?

It's true that the chalkboards screech faintly when you're really listening. The chairs groan a soft "good morning", and the lockers, who once boasted of flexibility have grown stiff without their midday stretch. The bulletins are frozen, in time and action. You cannot blame them. Their pins and staples haven't been changed for over half a year, and they've fallen into hibernation.

I miss you, Cohort O. Your names are whispered by muffled voices and the keys of the lobby piano. Every shadow is a place void of your footsteps; shining black shoes that will not scuff my floors.

I must have made you angry; you leave no gifts. No stray track pants, chargers, or styluses. This is how you show your love, isn't it? Instead, your peers leave me candy wrappers, masks, and drops of hand sanitizer; these are not such nice presents.

You have to understand, I get to hold you only so briefly; you sprint through my doors just as fast as you leave them. I have only a snapshot of you skipping in my halls. But I treasure that image, I do.

I haven't forgotten you, Cohort O. But have you forgotten me?

Love,

Campus Moatfield (nee. Duncan Mill)

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- The Writer's Block | Issue #1 (11/06/2020)

INDEPENDENT : SCHOOL

SEC Profiles: the Co-Heads of Council with Anavi



Anavi has been writing since she was a child and uses it as an outlet to destress. She hopes her last year will go out with a bang.



Alyana Nurani
Number of years at BVG: 16
Famous Last Words: "Don't take life too seriously, no one ever gets out of it alive."
-Elbert Hubbard



Ben Merbaum
Number of years at BVG: 6
Famous Last Words: "I'm not superstitious, but I am a little stitious."-I Scott

In these uncertain times, the need for dedicated leadership is imperative and we are incredibly lucky to have many student leaders here at Bayview Glen. Over the course of this year, I will be interviewing our student council and ask them questions about themselves. A one-minute speech is hardly enough to encompass all their marvelous personalities and intriguing tidbits, but regardless, I will try to do them justice.

How do you de-stress after a three-hour class?

Ben: I like to go for runs and get some exercise after school. I also enjoy spending time in nature and exploring the wilderness in the fall.

Alyana: After a three-hour class, I usually cry and obsess over everything for a little bit, then go to the park for the swings.

What is your favourite word?

Alyana: Crisp, because it starts at the back of your mouth and ends at the front. It goes all the way; it's my favourite.

Ben: Jelly, like from Jelly Belly.

Who is your favourite faculty member?

Ben: Mr. Sylvester. He's been an influential mentor in the last four years of high school.

Alyana: I refuse to answer this question because I am still asking for grades from these people.

What is your vision for the Upper School as Heads of Council?

Ben: My goal as Head of Student Council is to increase collaboration between various councils and committees. For example, a student council week where we have athletics events, combined with community outreach fundraisers and student life. We hope to merge everything together to create a dynamic of student cooperation.

Alyana: Our vision is to have as many events outside of school time as we can and try to revive the school spirit and events from last year. For example, dances or sports events on the turf while keeping social distancing in mind. Even though it will be different from what we are used to from past years, it will still be an opportunity to relax. I also agree with Ben; we are looking forward to having lots of collaboration this year, like house points involved in clubs, and the food and cultural day idea that is in the works from last year.

What is your favourite Bayview Glen memory?

Alyana: In Grade 10, my drama class went to the drama festival with Mr. Reynolds and Mrs. Hitchcock. The room we were staying in was a loft, so the washroom was right above the beds. Unfortunately, we discovered that the toilet wasn't in the best condition and the flush blew everything up. There was water everywhere, and it wasn't long before it leaked through the floor and onto the beds directly below. Long story short, it was an interesting night of bonding and no sleep spent on the couch of Mrs. Hitchcock's room.

Ben: I still remember playing Kahoot in Spanish class in Grade 9, when someone in our class made 50 bots and our teacher got so mad. That was a good day.

How do you stay active during COVID-19?

Ben: I play tennis every week, which helps me keep a steady routine during this time while also keeping me active.

Alyana: I have not been exercising, and you can tell — I've become a chunky monkey. Sometimes, I forget to eat for a couple days because of all the stress, which helps me burn calories.

What is your favourite part of BVG that is still going strong despite COVID-19?

Alyana: The play! It's going to be incredibly fun; it's still happening, and it's actually a movie now. I highly recommend it! Also, we are both very excited for Newspaper Club and we think it's going to be flawless.

Ben: I really like Model UN and Debate Club, but clubs in general keep you involved in school and teach you something new. It's also a great way to meet people that you may not ordinarily be exposed to. It's easy to find a club you are interested in, because there's so much variety here.

How has COVID-19 affected you positively?

Ben: For me, it's really been about finding different skills or techniques to learn because of the increase in free time at home. In general, there's just more space for new opportunities that you probably wouldn't have considered previously.

Alyana: I read over a hundred books because we don't have cable. Staying at home for so long helped me figure out who I was, because earlier I was floating in a haze of assessments and because of COVID-19, I spent a lot of time with myself. Also, I will never take my friends or school for granted again, because I realized how much I needed them in my life.

If all traces of COVID-19 disappeared for one day, what would you do?

Ben: Well, we have to organize a full field soccer game with house competitions and a potluck. Just lots of food, lots of spirit, lots of cheering. Or, if not, last-minute flash mob in the theatre, preferably to Halloween music. [Outside of school, I would probably go to Canada's Wonderland too.]

Alyana: I would take all my friends on the promised Grade 12 trip to Canada's Wonderland. After that, we'll go to a rave or a huge gathering so I can be around as many people as possible, without having to wear a mask or be six

feet apart.

What is one thing the student body should know about the two of you?

Both our Heads of Council echoed each other in response.

Both: We are one of you,

Alyana: In fact, we are probably below most of you. So please, don't be afraid of us. We are very friendly and approachable. If anyone has any ideas or even just something to say, come talk to us.

Ben: When I was in Grade 9, I used to play Minecraft in our common area so anything you've been through, we've been through.

WRITER'S THOUGHTS

This year, with our theme of courage, caring, and commitment, it is no wonder our Heads of Council are determined to include all committees and grades in the SEC initiatives. Their vision to make Bayview Glen a more cohesive unit is one I admire and respect. It seems to be exactly what we need to show this pandemic what our school is made of. I'm already looking forward to a wonderful school year!

This interview has been edited for clarity.

Do you have questions you want to ask your SEC? Email aparekh@bayviewglen.ca with queries and suggestions you have for your council.

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Bayview Glen Independent School | 275 Duncan Mill Road | Toronto, Ontario M3B 3H9 | 416.443.1030

