

ONLY THE YOUNG

By
Madison Wallace

[INTERVIEWER/HOST - MADISON WALLACE]

Welcome back to another episode of Only The Young. I'm your host, Madison Wallace, and today we'll be focusing on the effects of the atmosphere and environment of a school on students. Our school of focus today is known as the Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience. We'll discuss the environment the students are in and will also have an interview with one of the current juniors.

Since the start of high school, the collegiate class of 2024 has dealt with many things. virtual learning, hybrid learning, school building move, and most recently, a school shooting this most recent October. Yet, even throughout all the events the class went through, the grade is considerably one of the most close and most bonded in the entirety of the school. Some may say it's through bonding over shared 'traumatic' experiences, others might say we just found a way to like each other. I like to think we found a way to connect over a shared understanding that our high school path wouldn't be as normal as the movies implied. A lot of how we as a grade interact on a daily basis is based on how we felt that day, and how the school felt that day. I know some days I walk into the building and I can just feel this sense that something's wrong or something's off. And it affects my mood for the rest of the day. I know that the way I act changes when I feel like something's off in the building. On those off days, I shut down more. I'm quieter, I pay more attention to things than I normally do. And it messes with you as a person. It messes with your head, makes you feel like something so small, so simple, is what's going to define you as a person for the day. I mean, you wouldn't feel very compelled to learn in a building that's dark, cold, uninviting. I mean it would just make you miserable! That effect? That's the kind of effect that things as simple as lighting can and have had on a student's ability to feel comfortable, feel like they belong, feel like they can walk in and think to themselves 'This is where I want to be. this is where I'm going to become the person I want to be.'

As mentioned before, we asked a member of the class of 2024 different questions about how they felt about the environment and atmosphere of the school. Here are a few clips from their interview.

Throughout three years of high school is there a clear difference in atmospheres on certain days?

[INTERVIEWEE - ALLISON ROJAS]

I would say definitely. There are some days when I go into school and it just genuinely feels like a different vibe. Like something feels off. I feel like something either it feels like something bad is going to happen, or it just doesn't feel right. Like compared to other days, there's there's something that I don't like about the way compared to other days, there's just something that I don't like about how the day feels. And there are some other days that are that are like, to day feels great. It's starting off with a good vibe, and I feel like today is going to be great, even if it

ends up not being great. That initial vibe in the morning of what the atmosphere is like definitely sets the tone for that day. I don't really know what it is. Sometimes it's just kind of a gut feeling. And a lot of the time there's lots of other students that will share that gut feeling, even if we don't really know what it is.

[INTERVIEWER/HOST - MADISON WALLACE]

What is your preferred atmosphere for learning? For being in school in general?

[INTERVIEWEE - ALLISON ROJAS]

Um, for my preferred atmosphere for learning, I would just say, like, spaces that I feel comfortable in. Alford's classroom, I think is a really great example of a room that I feel comfortable in, because it's just so homelike in a way where the lights are dimmed. There's a diffuser going, there's hot water ready if you want to make some tea or coffee or hot chocolate or anything like that. And the radio is going in the morning. And it's just something where I can feel really comfortable and kind of ease into the school day. Ease into the school day a lot more easily compared to if it was just right off the bat, going straight to schoolwork and things like that. So definitely something that is just I prefer to have a comfortable atmosphere and for being in school in general, not just for learning. Something where there's a community, something where you can say hi to someone in the hallway. You might not even have any classes with them, you might not even really be friends with them, but you can still say hi to them because you're cool, like you guys are chill like that. I like being able to walk into school and know that there's someone that's going to greet me or know that there's going to be someone to sit next to.

[INTERVIEWER/HOST - MADISON WALLACE]

Was there a certain feeling or effect on the school that may have affected how you felt on October 24? Or did you feel a certain atmosphere during the lead up to the events of October 24?

[INTERVIEWEE - ALLISON ROJAS]

This isn't like a general school thing, I don't think anyone else I mean, there's probably, like, a couple of people who felt the same thing as me. But that was the day that we were supposed to turn in our AP. What's it called? That was the day that we were supposed to turn in those papers saying that we were going to take those AP tests, like the specific ones, and you'd circle and you would turn into Miss Nikolai. And I left it in my room, so I realized at school. So I texted my mom if she could go bring it. So I was, like, a little bit I was, I guess, stressed for the wrong reason before everything happened that morning, because I was stressed about my mom bringing this form that was due that day. And then obviously I forgot about it later, and I didn't care about it after everything happened on October 24. And for the next question, did you feel a certain atmosphere during the lead up to the events of October 24? I feel like there wasn't really a lead up to the events. How I said earlier, sometimes it just feels like sometimes there's just, like, a bad mood or a bad vibe going into school sometimes, and I don't really know what it is. I don't really

think that there's anything like that leading up to October 24 because genuinely nothing could have prepared me for that. The only possible negative vibes I had that morning before everything happened was thinking, oh, my gosh, I need to turn in this AP commitment form because it's due today. There was no, I guess, foreboding feeling, thinking, um, of thinking that something bad is going to happen until, you know, everything did.

[INTERVIEWER/HOST - MADISON WALLACE]

Do you believe that there was a different feel between the building we originally started high school in and the building we moved into sophomore year?

[INTERVIEWEE - ALLISON ROJAS]

There definitely was a different feel between the building we originally started in and the building we moved into sophomore year. Because the building we started in, it was this like the aesthetic itself was just so different compared to the building we have now because the building freshman year was this really beautiful old building that had this old academia aesthetic to it, and it was just so beautiful. It's one of those things where you can just admire the hallways, you can admire classrooms just because of the design. And then switching from that building to the one we have now. The one we have now is very stereotypical high school, like, stereotypical 60s architecture high school in a way where it's very rectangular and flat and wide and long, and it's just boxes, like bricks and boxes, and it's not as architecturally beautiful as the old building was. So there was definitely a literal physical change in the feel between the buildings. And I also feel like maybe there was almost like a slight culture shift associated with the buildings because in this old building where it's this very old, beautiful school building, collegiate is supposed to be the school of academics and rigor and things like that. And when you're in this old school building, it kind of does have that same vibe and same aesthetic of almost like studying in an old university and then switching to a building that's just a generic high school building. I wouldn't say that Collegiate lost. What's the word I'm looking for? I guess just. The aesthetic or what it's known for, of being like, you know, rigorous in academics. Because definitely that is the what collegiate is known for. But I feel like as a student going here, you know, how sometimes people will romanticize, like, going to school and imagining that they're going to a fancy boarding school or something. It's a lot harder to do that in a building that is more gen generic compared to, like, a really pretty old building.

[INTERVIEWER/HOST - MADISON WALLACE]

Do you have anything you want to say about your experiences at camp with your group?

[INTERVIEWEE - ALLISON ROJAS]

Um, when it comes to experiences with my group at camp, I loved that because it was one of those experiences where I was grouped with people. I was grouped with people that I was friends

with, but I was also grouped with people that I don't really talk to. And it's one of those things where we really build this morale, doing these team things, such as the crate stacking and climbing the climbing wall and hyping each other up and everything like that. And it's just so much fun, because even though I might not really still talk to these people again after that, there is definitely some really good memories made with these people. And they're not just another person that I know goes to school with me. I have this great memory of doing these things with them at camp. And even if it's not the actual group we were assigned to, if it's like talking about if I want to talk about the group, our bunking group, that was also really nice because it's one of those things where it was just like a sleepover, girl talk. We're talking about everything, Ms. Halama is telling us about her love life. You don't have to keep that in there if you don't want to. We're finding out all these connections, and it was just really fun. And I love connecting with people. It's one of those things that even if those connections don't continue after camp, I'm still so glad that we made them while we were at camp.

[INTERVIEWER/HOST - MADISON WALLACE]

I, as a fellow member of the class of 2024, would like to note a few things. Collegiate has different ways to grow a certain atmosphere between the students and the school. During house wars days, the school feels lighter, it's more exciting, and people want to be there. It's one of the highlights of attending the school. However, there are also just days when the school feels dark, unencouraging, the students don't want to be there. I mean- no one wants to be there during those days. The classes seem to just drag on, and the entire school feels like it's just waiting, wishing for those days to be over... and that's something no school - no student - wants to have to feel, to have to deal with.

Once we all arrived back in school after our extended time off to, for lack of better words, recuperate after October 24th, we talked to each other. I mean, we just sat and talked to each other. We talked about what we felt that day. Some people mentioned that they felt something was off that morning, leading up to what would eventually occur. Maybe we did feel like that or maybe the feeling was just later on implanted in our memories, making us think we felt like that beforehand. Feel that sort of 'justification' in our head that we knew something was going to happen. That we knew the day was off. But we'll never know. And maybe that's just something we'll have to deal with... On a lighter note, one of the times I felt the best about being with my fellow juniors, being in a light atmosphere, a light environment, was actually one where we weren't even in the school building. At the beginning of April, we were finally able to go on our class bonding trip to Camp Wyman. Our government teacher split us randomly into groups. So for two days, we spent the majority of that time together with people we didn't talk to every single day, learning more about each other and becoming better friends with them. The other times we weren't with our groups we were all out in the fields, by the lake, just talking and enjoying the outdoors time. It was one of the highlights of my junior year.

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I'd like to end today's episode by reminding you that these types of things are changeable. We can change the ways students learn. We can change the experiences they have to go through. And maybe the people in charge now aren't gonna do it, to help us. Maybe they won't change it. But we can do it ourselves, and we will. We can be the driving force. We *are* the driving force for change. This is your host, Madison Wallace, signing off on today's episode of 'Only The Young.'