



Personal Reflections

10/6/2020

Dear IMSA Community,

Last week, I presented a [webinar](#) via Zoom for principals and school leaders in Puerto Rico, sponsored by the Puerto Rico Education Foundation, regarding leading schools in the era of COVID-19. Puerto Rico has 1,120 public schools serving 345,815 students. Earlier in the summer, on July 6, 2020, I presented via Zoom at a conference for teachers of [PrepaTec](#), a private school system throughout Mexico. There were 1,300 teachers who participated via live stream. The pandemic has "flattened" the world even more. Before the coronavirus, if my schedule allowed, I would get on a plane to present at these conferences. Now, I can contribute to educators in Puerto Rico, or throughout Mexico in the morning, and within minutes, attend a meeting with colleagues at IMSA or visit an IMSA classroom. I imagine that after this pandemic is over, some things in our lives will continue to be different.

As I write this Reflection today, over 205,000 people have died in the U.S. due to COVID-19. The families they left behind, fatherless sons, motherless daughters, childless parents, parentless children, grandparents and friends taken from us suddenly, are different and forever altered because of the coronavirus.

Even the rhythm of our lives with seasons of the year coming and going seems strange, too. In the third season of our pandemic, we are now celebrating the beginning of the fall on September 22. We began our quarantine this spring on March 19. On June 20, we started the summer while we were at home. Where will we be when winter begins on December 21? I am pretty confident that we will be right where we are now. We will see the beginning of winter from our windows in quarantine.

—
I'm not writing this to depress you. I am merely making some observations about life in the era of COVID-19. As I stated at [Convocation](#), we must embrace our window of hope framed by realistic optimism. This virus will be over; we will get over this pandemic. Eventually.

I am currently reading *The Inward Journey*, by Howard Thurman. Thurman writes, "Life keeps coming on, keeps seeking to fulfill itself, keeps affirming the possibility of hope." I have to look no further than the first child of my sister-in-law, Joven, born on



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hope.” I have to look no further than the first child of my sister-in-law, Jaxon, born on August 26. Some of us feel we are living a dream-deferred life because of COVID-19; in reality, life keeps coming on...affirming the possibility of hope.

On September 19, IMSA held our first Virtual Preview Day. I asked the 340 people viewing me through 190 screens why they would choose to come to IMSA, a residential academy, presently doing everything via distance learning. I said they are doing so because of our hope that this pandemic will be over someday. Additionally, I reminded them that our first IMSA class, the charter class who graduated in 1989, came to IMSA in 1986 to a residential academy that had not yet built residential halls. They [enrolled in our possibilities.](#)

This fall, we have seen the opening and shutting down of schools. Many universities started on campus and went online when their positivity rates skyrocketed. No one has a playbook on how to reopen schools safely. While we are doing the best we can via distance learning, we would rather be learning face-to-face and living life in community with roommates, sports, clubs, drill, etc.

I am asked frequently when IMSA is going to begin classes face-to-face. I reply when it's safer to do so. I'm not saying that we won't take risks; I'm just saying that it needs to be safer.

Our Transition Task Force members continue to work extremely hard on scenario planning, so we can be ready to reopen quickly and begin face-to-face classes with all the required protocols. If you were to ask me if we are going to begin classes back on campus in January, my reply is it is possible; it is not guaranteed, however. We need to hold on to realistic optimism.

Respectfully,

—

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President

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P.S. Thank you for the many kind words and your congratulations on my announced retirement. As I am fond of saying now, I am still here and working as IMSA President through May 2021. #stillIMSAPresident