

First month of school illuminates need for individual responsibility

The first month of the school year has shown Staples an entirely new social and academic experience. While the efforts of the administration cannot be understated, much of the obligation to keep our school functioning lies with us: the students, staff and Westport community as a whole. The need for caution with our peers, as well as responsibility within ourselves, is more important now than ever before.

From the smallest, most minute details to the largest structural changes, we have seen the staff and administration working tirelessly to create and maintain a system that provides an in-person, safe learning environment. While not every element is praised by the student body— inconvenient one-way hallways, the elimination of rentable chargers at the library and inconsistent mask breaks across classes, to name a few—the time and effort put into the planning and execution of the hybrid model reflect immense thought and care.

However, the Editorial Board believes that students and staff as individuals have a duty to hold themselves accountable for the safety and integrity of the school. The work of the administration cannot be upheld alone; each member of our community must step up to create a safe environment. With this in mind, Staples students and staff should carry themselves to this same high standard of individual responsibility in order to match the efforts of Staples' administration.

Precautions such as social distancing and one-way hallways become obsolete when members of our community make the decision to disregard them. Talking to peers without masks in the cafeteria or offices and closely congregating in groups at school are both hugely counterproductive to the schoolwide effort to keep our students and staff healthy and safe.

The Editorial Board understands the need to spend time with friends outside of school; however, it is essential to keep in mind the safety of the community when doing so. Students and staff have an obligation to educate themselves and exercise restraint and responsibility, in order to avoid rendering school-wide safety measures obsolete.

As shown by students at Fairfield Ludlowe High School, the decision of students to socialize among multiple large parties can cause COVID to spread and school to shut down. When choosing peer groups to spend time with in a non-distanced capacity, one should carefully consider the number of people their close friends have

been in contact with. Additionally, those who are breaking guidelines in any capacity should take extra precautions when in public to minimize risk of transmission.

The work that has gone into creating a functioning model for our school has taken significant time and effort. While the ability to continue socializing and enjoying oneself is important, students and staff also have a responsibility to keep the community safe and support the work done to facilitate a meaningful academic experience. Without this communal effort we may end up out of school, losing the educational and social benefits of learning in-person.