

# Recess back in session

The Baugh brothers reflect on their return to in-person elementary school



Jackson and Nate Baugh smile and act silly from their backyard playground after school — keeping recess going even after hours. Photo by Madelynn Niles.

## CANDID CAMERA

We gave third-grader Jackson Baugh a camera to capture his life as an elementary schooler during the pandemic. Here are the results:



Jackson's peers pose for class photo.

### MADELYNN NILES

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Good things about third grade during COVID: more recess, no homework, cool masks.

Bad things: less friends at school, you can't play tag.

According to third-grader Jackson Baugh, going back to elementary school in person after remote learning is horribly awesome.

"Awesome because I'm back at school," he explained, "horrible because we have to wear masks all day."

His little brother Nate, a first-grader, also has mixed feelings about the pandemic's effects on in-person learning.

"All of this COVID stuff is horrid," he said. "It kills like really

important people, just like for instance, Justin Bieber, but that's not true because it didn't kill him. But just for instance."

If you ask the Baugh brothers what school they attend, Nate will tell you they're students at *Goo-llett-i-shmett* Elementary. His big brother Jackson will then explain that that's just his Russian accent, and that they actually go to Gullett.

In both boys' classes, there are two types of students: the Zoomers and the in-person kids. Nate knows every classmate by heart, and even took delight in listing each member of the respective groups.

"So there's Kieran, Vincent, Henry, Aidan, me of course—"

"The amazing you," his brother interrupted.

"The amazing me," Nate continued. "Sam, Sawyer, Vivian, Olivia," and the list goes on.

When asked if they felt sad when Zoomers don't have their cameras on, Nate explained that no, it's not sad, because he already knows what their faces look like.

Other than smaller classes, the boys decided that the biggest difference about school is the masks.

"This one kid took off his mask once and put it in his backpack," Jackson said, "and we were like 'No! Don't do that!' And then we got under our desks. We were like, 'We're all gonna die!'"

But despite the craziness and new rules, the boys still get to enjoy their favorite part of school — recess.

"We get extra recess all the time because the teachers keep chatting," Jackson said.

"Chit-chit-chit-chat!" Nate demonstrated.

"Sometimes we play four square with the second-graders, and the worst part is that sometimes they lemon drop you," he said. "And when they lemon drop you, you immediately just get out."

Lemon dropping, according to the boys, is the meanest move you can make in four square, reserved exclusively for the big kids.

"The second-graders boss around the first graders, the first-graders boss around the kindergartners, the kindergartners boss around the pre-K's," Nate explained. "Once I outsmarted a kindergartner. He was like 'This is a gold piece!' And it wasn't really gold, and then I was like 'That's not even gold,' and just like outsmarted him."

But even with outsmarting the kindergartners, being a first-grader is tough.

"Sometimes I act like I'm older than them, like this."

Nate made a certified cool-guy face and pointed at his big brother with two finger guns. "To everybody that's just a kindergartner or a pre-K, I'm just like, 'sup man.'"

This semester, the coolest thing Jackson is learning is history, especially the wars.

"I like the sword-fighting wars," Jackson said, accompanied with some sword-fight sound effects.

As for Nate, spelling and math are the trickiest. He is currently mastering the words "because" and "insect," and minuses and pluses are starting to become "easy-peasy."

"I'm even learning multiplication and times," he said. "That's in second grade, but I still do it. Oh and um, 2013-2011 I think is two."

His brother pondered this answer for a few moments before confirming that he was correct.

Even with his subtraction skills, Nate feels that learning in person is harder than virtually.

"It's harder to learn in person, because online you kind of pretend to do your work —"

"You don't do your work?" Jackson interjected with a gasp.

"Well, like for instance," Nate explained, "You pretend you are doing your work but you're actually playing your PS4."

Nate giggled at his mischief and said he was only joking.

The two stated that they are kind of nervous about getting the virus, but Nate, who had by then put tiger slippers on his hands, expressed more concern about having claws for fingers.

As for Jackson, however, the worst part about in-person school isn't the distance, the masks or the tiger hands.

"The hardest part of school," he said with confidence, "is waiting for lunch."

*"This one kid took off his mask once and put it in his backpack and we were like 'No! Don't do that!' And we all got under our desks."*

— Jackson Baugh



Jackson sports his mask: selfie style.



Classmates study online six feet apart and with plastic desk shields.



The boys say goodbye to another day of learning as they leave Gullett Elementary.