

# Reflecting on the Flames

BY TANISHA GUNBY '21

When Yvette Copeland '21 woke up in the morning of Dec. 6, she received an alert to evacuate her house because of the nearby fires.

"We got the alert through a text on our phones at around 5 a.m., and immediately left the house. We spent the night at our cousin's house, until we were told it was safe to come back," Copeland said.

The fires in Southern California affected many in the community, and as a result, the school was closed for two days for safety reasons on Dec. 6 and Dec. 7. In an online survey taken by 243 middle school students, 68 percent of the respondents said that their residences were not affected. 74 percent of students knew between one to 10 students that were significantly affected by the fires.

About 15 percent of respondents were evacuated and said that they were surprised at how close their houses were to the fire.

"When I had to evacuate early in the morning, I wasn't able to watch the news until I was at a friend's house later that day. I could see the flames from my house, but I didn't really know how bad it was until I saw a news channel filming firefighters putting out flames several houses away from mine. It was shocking to see," Gisele Stigi '22 said in the survey.

Students said they were surprised by the fires and how it affected many people, including their peers.

"When I first heard about the fire, I was surprised and a little bit in shock, because I had never witnessed a natural disaster that affected people and was so close to me. I felt terrible for those whose houses and lives were affected, and I thank the extremely brave firefighters who saved the day," Alex Hyman '23 said in the survey.

Survey respondents said they felt that the school's closure had a positive effect on our community.

"I'm glad, that not only I got a break, but those affected did not have to worry about school on top of their current situation," Ryan Prybil '21 said in the survey.

X periods, homework and testing schedules were altered due to the sudden closure. During the two days off, about 83 percent of the survey's respondents said they received extra work from their classes. Most homework given was from math and world language classes.

Some respondents said that there were little to no changes in schoolwork because of the fires.

"My schoolwork was not really affected at all due to the fires. If anything, I had more time to catch up on studying and other projects," Violet Barron '22 said in the survey.

Other students said that the fires had a big impact on their workload and the dates of their testing.

"I was able to catch up on a lot of work, but for math we got much more than an hour of homework when the limit was 30 minutes, and I had other activities such as sports practice and music lessons. Also, the day I got back I had a project and multiple tests everyday of the next week. Many of my X periods were cancelled, so the time for me to study and meet with teachers for my tests was taken away," an anonymous survey respondent said.

Many assessments were moved, modified or canceled due to the changes in the schedule with the majority being in math, history and science.

Fortunately, 95 percent of the students who responded to the survey were able to return to school on Dec. 8. For some students like Copeland, however, the two days were some of the hardest of their lives.

"Although the fires were unfortunate, it was nice to see the community coming together to support the people who were seriously affected by them," Copeland said.



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15% of respondents had to evacuate



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