



Sadie, a junior, 100% virtual, Plans: Lab Tech/Scientist



Meet Sadie. Sadie is a life-long resident of Cedar Rapids and has lived in the same home her entire life. Sadie had a very traumatic beginning to her school career and by the end of 1st grade was begging to not have to go to school. Her parents, on a trip to Disney World and the ocean, discovered that Sadie might have anxiety in larger groups. She was sick to her stomach every day they were at Disney World and happy and active when they went to the beach for a few days. When they asked her which part of the trip she liked she said, “the beach! There were too many people at Disney World.” They tried some medications

but that only made her tired and lethargic. The Cedar Rapids District offered a full Virtual school opportunity through the Cedar Rapids Virtual Academy and Sadie began full-time online learning as a 3rd grader. Sadie is currently a junior and continues as a full-time online learner. She has an older sister who is a junior at the University of Iowa.

Sadie’s “Week in the Life” Example

It is mid-October and Sadie has another full load of online courses including AP Calculus, AP US History, English, Spanish III, PE, AP Chemistry, Sociology, and Introduction to Business. Sadie is due to have all her HS credits wrapped up at the end of this year and hopes to take advantage of the Dual Enrollment Option to spend her senior year getting her college prerequisite courses taken care of. Sadie enjoys science and math and is considering a degree in either chemistry or biology. With her ongoing anxiety issues, she thinks having a lab job as a chemist or biologist might fit her well.

Monday

Sadie wakes up at 11. She and her family just returned late last night from a week-long trip to Rocky Mountain National Park and a visit to both the University of Colorado, Boulder and Colorado State in Fort Collins. While beautiful places, both were way too large and the cities too crowded for her.

While she was able to do some work last week, she does feel a bit behind as she moves to her desk. While eating a bowl of cereal, Sadie jumps into her PE class. She logged her hiking time, distance and elevation on her watch while in Colorado and spends the first 20 minutes uploading her data and describing her fitness routine from last week.

For several hours Sadie plugs away at her online courses. Around 3pm she realizes she's a bit lost in her Calculus and Chemistry classes and wants to make sure she understands before moving on. She emails Shawn at the City View Community Magnet High School. "Shawn, this is Sadie. Would you have time in the next day or two to meet with me? I'm a bit confused with my chemistry and calculus. I'm flexible the next two days so anytime that might work for you is good for me."

Shawn replies within 30 minutes, "Sadie. Good to hear from you! Of course, happy to help. I have time tomorrow at 11:15 and could give you about 45 minutes if you need it. Let me know! -Shawn"

Sadie accepts and turns her attention to her English and Spanish. After supper, Sadie works another two hours and feels like she is close to caught up. As she lay in bed, she reminds herself that going to City View tomorrow will be good. It is a relatively small group of learners and people there are nice. Her Mom and Dad have been encouraging her to spend more time at the school, knowing she'd have a similar situation in college. Sadie sets goals for herself. 1) She would eat lunch there and 2) she would stay at least another hour working on her school work.

Tuesday

Sadie is up early, 6 am. She didn't get her exercise in yesterday due to sleeping in so she gets dressed and heads out for a 3 mile run. Sadie enjoys the early morning, the crisp October air, and the silence and aloneness a morning run affords her.

After her shower she works on her business course and takes a test for Sociology until it is time to head to the City View. She arrives around 11:00 and stops at the Early Bird to grab a latte. The elevator to the 5th floor opens and she scans herself in. "Good morning, Sadie!" says Pat at the front desk. "It's been awhile. How have you been?"

“Fine. Thanks. Is Shawn here?” Sadie’s a bit nervous and feeling anxious all of a sudden.

“Sure. Done anything fun lately?”

“Yeah. We just got back from hiking in the Rockies.”

“That must have been amazing! Do you have any pictures on your phone?,” asked Pat.

Sadie steps up to Pat’s desk and scrolls through several photos, even making a little commentary as she does. As she is finishing up, Shawn approaches. “Hey, Sadie! Good to see you, let’s get started!”

They walk to a small workroom and Sadie links up to the Chromecast to show Shawn her screen. For the next 50 minutes they work through both the Chemistry and Calculus work until Sadie feels confident she knows the material and is ready to move on.

Sadie steps out and thinks about bolting for the door instead of carrying out her plan. Another learner who is almost 100% online, Lucas, sees her. “Hey, Sadie! How have you been? What are you doing here?”

“Hey, Lucas. I’m good. Just here getting some help from Shawn on Chemistry and Calculus. What are you doing here?”

“I decided this year to try out a project and my team meets right after lunch. Hey, you might like this project, we are doing some pretty serious data analysis for LimoLink,” says Lucas. “Do you wanna grab lunch with me and maybe sit in with us to see what you think?”

Sadie thinks for a moment. She’ll stay for lunch but the project team meeting. . . she’s not sure. “I’ll definitely have lunch with you. We’ll see about the project meeting.”

Sadie and Lucas have lunch at a small table and are joined by Bryce, another learner on Lucas’ team. Sadie enjoys the time and, with all the space and fewer learners, doesn’t feel anxious at all. As lunch ends Bryce says, “So, Sadie. If math is your thing, I think you’d love our project. Do you want to come sit in on it?”

Lucas, knowing about Sadie’s anxiety in groups says, “It’s only 5 of us, Sadie. C’mon. I think you’ll like it.”

Sadie agrees and follows Bryce and Lucas. She is introduced to the other team members and relaxes a bit when she sees that Shawn is the sponsor teacher for this project. She listens intently to their conversation and is intrigued by the data set the team is pouring through. By the end, she even offers some comments and ideas.

As the team is filing out, Shawn says, “Hey, Sadie. Did this project interest you?”

“It does. It is interesting.”

“I know you have a really full load of online courses this semester so this may be too much but would you like to join this team? If not now, maybe at semester?”

“Let me think about it. Maybe second semester.”

Wednesday

After Sadie’s workout, she begins to tackle the Chemistry and Calculus she and Shawn had talked about yesterday. She flies through the Calculus and takes the unit test, passing it easily and by 1:00 is 2 units ahead of the pace for the course. Part of Sadie’s improvement plan is to spend more time out in public and in places where other people congregate. Today, her Mom gives her the grocery list and debit card and asks her to go to Hy-Vee.

Sadie takes a few deep breaths, jumps in the car, and heads to Hy-Vee. Each visit is getting easier and easier and her anxiety is manageable. Knowing the landscape of Hy-Vee helps. Sadie returns home, puts groceries away, and spends the rest of the afternoon texting with a few friends she’d met at City View.

Thursday

After her workout, Sadie takes a test in both Chemistry and Spanish. Lacking some motivation today, she decides to grab a book and head to the Early Bird for a latte and some good reading. She is just getting into her book when Lucas and a few other learners roll in laughing. “Hey, Sadie!” says Lucas. “Mind if we invade your space?”

Sadie smiles. She wants to say no but it doesn’t seem like an option since she’s curled up on the couch surrounded by other comfy chairs. The kids from the City View grab their drinks and sit around Sadie. For the first few minutes, they seem to ignore Sadie and she’s starting to feel anxious. Finally, a girl named Olivia turns to her. “Sadie, right?” Sadie nods. “So what’s it like being a full time online learner?”

“Well,” says Sadie. “I don’t know, I’ve been virtual since 3rd grade so I don’t really know anything different.”

“What do you like about it?”

“I can work at my own pace and decide when it’s time for school. I like to run in the mornings so I can do that. I can shop for my Mom at any time. I don’t know, I guess I learn pretty good by going through the lessons on the computer.”

“Cool.”

The group continues visiting and talks about Bridgerton and Killing Eve, two series on Netflix. Sadie, having watched them both, engages in the conversation. Before she knows it, an hour has passed.

“Damn!” says Lucas. “We gotta jump or we’ll be late to the last session.”

They all say goodbye to Sadie as they rush out the door. Sadie smiles thinking that was nice and that she’s slowly getting to know several learners at City View. She reads for another hour and heads home.

Friday

This morning, Sadie spends her time on the phone visiting with the recruiters from Simpson, Coe, and Luther Colleges. They all talk about the small class sizes, the smaller campus, and the family feel of their campus. Sadie books appointments to each of the schools over the next three weeks. She hopes one feels like home. She spends a few hours plugging away at her online courses and meets virtually with her Spanish instructor to get some clarity on some pronunciations.

She visits with her Dad about the possibility of joining a project team at City View second semester. He encourages her to take that step. Sadie is glad she is enrolled in a Virtual School that has a great in-person option and gives her access to other helpful teachers.