

Proper use of phones in school debated

BY ADELINE DODD
Staff Writer

As students push open the black doors that lead to the Minnehaha Academy Upper School and stroll into the commons area, the first sight that greets them is their fellow students looking down.

At lunch students walk through the cafeteria booths and tables and see people looking down.

It's after school and while they wait for their rides, students are sitting on the red couches and benches of the commons area looking down.

What are the objects that have stolen the attention of so many people? Cell phones.

Some students are using Snapchat, others are watching TV, playing games and a handful are making TikTok videos.

For new students, this can be an intimidating sight. How do you start a conversation amidst the flood of phones?

Freshman Joey Knatterud is one of only a few people in the 9th grade class at Minnehaha Academy not to have a phone. Phones made starting at a new school this year harder for her. Since she doesn't have a phone, she sometimes felt excluded from the conversations that



Photo by Adeline Dodd

Phone hotels. Phone daycare. Phone boxes. Whatever they are nicknamed, these containers have become a common sight near the doors of Minnehaha classrooms. Students leave their phones in them as they enter class and pick them up as they leave.

happened.

"A lot of the conversations happening are about what's happening on social media, not about things that are happening right now," said Knatterud.

Phones also make frequent appearances during the twice a week school advisory meetings. Some students, such as Knatterud, feel that having phones in advisory groups create challenges while getting to know your classmates.

"The purpose of advisory groups is to get to know people," said Knatterud. "Not just to be sitting on your phones."

Phones make it easier to isolate yourself from your peers during bonding experiences, and make getting to know people at the beginning of the school year harder, especially for new students.

For many students, it is an almost natural instinct to pull out their phones when a lull in conversation occurs.

"Our phones are something that we've all gotten used to as kind of being a part of our everyday life," said Christine Paton, one of the Upper School counselors.

But when students contin-

ue the conversations without phones, it creates "a level playing ground," said Paton. "The things I've seen this year ... have really included a lot of distraction by cell phones for students. Distractions that take away from all of our core values.... I think they take away from our community."

Another common time for phones to appear is during the free period that many students had this school year.

"Everybody... at some point is available to just sit, and of course they should be doing their homework, but I think the default for many people is 'I'll just sit on my

phone," said Mike DiNardo, the Upper School principal.

This year at the Upper School, teachers implemented a phone storage method that some call the "cell hotel" and required students to put their phones there during class.

As the school year progressed, fewer students put their phones in the "cell hotel." Phones became a constant distraction during class.

The Upper School teachers and other staff are considering changing their phone policy.

"If phones are allowed," DiNardo said, "during the school day, they need to only be allowed when it's appropriate."

The updated phone policy will likely include stricter consequences for students who are on their phones when they are not supposed to be.

Phones are an immense part of the world in 2022. Students use them to text parents and friends, watch TV, and even as a calculator for their math homework. (My phone was one of my biggest tools in reporting and writing this story).

However the challenge for Minnehaha Academy students is knowing when to look back up from their phone screens and engage fully in the moment during conversations and activities.

Unlikely links between school, space & war

BY JOHN MISA
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Testing shark skin on bacteria growth, growing calcium carbonate crystals and trying to revive dried algae have all been experiments worked on and sent into space by the Minnehaha ISS (International Space Station) team.

But with recent news on Russia withdrawing from the ISS and the removal of the Space Station in upcoming years, what does the future of this class look like?

Growing Algae

The 2021-2022 Minnehaha Academy International Space Station experiment will grow *Chlorella Algae* and study how it converts carbon dioxide to oxygen in space. This year's Minnehaha Academy ISS team created the experiment, which was sent to the International Space Station (ISS) on April 27.

"We chose to grow algae because collecting data on carbon dioxide consumption could help solve many of the current issues they are having on the ISS," said ISS team member Lars Ramgren.

One of the growing problems on the ISS is the high rising levels of CO₂.

"Since air doesn't circulate in

microgravity compared to that on Earth, CO₂ can build up in parts of the ISS," Ramgren explained. "This build-up can be hazardous to the astronauts on the ISS. Finding ways to get rid of this CO₂ buildup could be critical in future space projects."

With this team's project coming to a close, concerns about the future of the class rise as many obstructions have started to appear.

Russia/Ukraine Impact

On Feb. 24, Russia invaded Ukraine, starting a war whose impact has stretched not only across the planet but also into space.

Since 2000, when people first moved in, the ISS has generally managed to stay out of Earth-bound politics—but the Ukraine conflict could change that. Recently Russia has stated that it will end cooperation with western countries over the ISS until sanctions are lifted.

For decades, the U.S. and Russia have collaborated in space.

"From the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, which took place mid-Cold War, to the continued partnership in the International Space Station program, the two nations have worked together in space amidst political upheaval on Earth," stated a report on

Space.com, a media website focusing on space-related news.

"By design, the ISS relies on Russia working together smoothly with 14 other nations," the report stated. "Part of the station is Russian-built and operated by cosmonauts. The NASA-led side of the station provides electrical power to the Russian side, while Russia provides the orbital boosting that is occasionally needed to stop the ISS from falling to lower altitudes and disintegrating in Earth's atmosphere."

The possibilities of how Russia's withdrawal could affect the ISS are still unclear as news about the Russia and Ukraine invasion changes daily.

However, with this recent end in ISS cooperation, missions with Russian-led instrument teams, such as the neutron detector on its Curiosity Mars rover could be impacted.

Along with political issues impacting the Space Station, NASA has announced that the station will be decommissioned in 2031.

The ISS will be creeping back to Earth before splashing down in a remote part of the Pacific Ocean.

This allows Minnehaha to send their research to space for at most only nine more years.

With many obstacles in the way of the class, Minnehaha students

and faculty have many hopes for the future of the ISS class.

The Future of the Class

"This has been something on my mind for a while now," said ISS team advisor and physics teacher Tim Swanson. "What will we do next if we aren't able to send our research to space?"

One possible option is an engineering class that finds a real-world problem and designs a project over a semester trying to further understand the topic. Minnehaha has explored this possibility in the past by introducing a sustainable garden project.

"We're always on the lookout for new ways to use engineering for practical applications," said Swanson. "It was an idea of continuing to create an engineering project that solves a problem outside of the ISS specific program. This type of class is just something down the line we're going to need when we stop sending our work to space."

Another option, Swanson said, is to still focus on microgravity projects but attempt to complete the testing on Earth.

Ramgren is also curious about what the future of the class will look like.

"It will be cool to see what the school comes up with as a

replacement for the class," he said. "Being part of this prestigious class gives students an incredible opportunity to expand their interest in engineering. Given how much interest the ISS class gets from the students, I bet Minnehaha will try to implement more similar type engineering classes to the course registration options."

The ISS class has drawn students to change their course work to meet the requirements so that they can be accepted into the class. Students will even take certain classes and extracurricular courses like 3D print and coding lessons so that they have an increased chance of being accepted.

"Will we have another class that students try to adjust their whole academic direction to get into? It's hard to say," exclaimed Swanson.

Competition has its benefits.

"I would love to see that though," he said, "because I feel that when you have a class that draws interest like that, not only do you end up with a motivated group of students that are ready to take on any task, but then they are also learning things not because they are told to, but because they have a genuine interest for it. I'm excited to see the future of engineering at Minnehaha."