



The High School View

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Overuse of technology impedes students' focus

BY RUBY REIMANN, MARIA CLARA LACERDA AND JACK [REDACTED] OJNOWSKI

After almost three months since the start of remote learning this school year, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) students continue to struggle staying focused during Zoom classes.

"Phones are definitely a distraction," said junior Graham Stearns. "I think it's more of a personal problem rather than something teachers can control. [My phone] is having a negative impact on my learning and productivity because it's taking time away from other things I could be doing."

While students acknowledge their own accountability in their increased use of technology, distraction and a worsening attachment to phones is also a by-product

of remote learning which allows students to check their phone without the repercussions they would typically face if they were learning in person.

More and more time spent on screens has translated not only to increased technology use during Zoom classes, but also to increased technological savviness. Students can simply shrink their Zoom tabs during class, making it easy—in theory—to mess around with their sound mixing in order to watch a movie on Netflix while their Zoom class is silent, all while seeming to be present.

Use of simultaneous technology is easier and more tempting than ever. Senior Owen Steenkamp acknowledged that he often finds himself using his computer during Zoom classes for ulterior purposes.

"Usually, it's to get work done for other classes, mostly with the intent that after school, I can get off the screen and do something else."

Being confronted by teachers for catching up on other classes' workloads during Zoom sessions has not been an issue for Owen. "I try not to do it while they are teaching, more when there are lulls," he said.

Because students are putting their phones on their computer screens during Zoom classes to make it appear as though they're looking into the camera, teachers are facing a problem they've never had before: not being able to see if their students are on their phones.

Teachers have had to navigate how to keep students engaged with increased distractions at home. History teacher Leigh Fairchild-

Coppoletti said, "I have to try not to think about it too much and just stay engaged in the lesson, because if I think about it too much I start getting paranoid about students on other devices and I lose my momentum."

Because virtual learning requires more independence on the part of the learner, students now have to be more accountable for themselves, as they no longer have a teacher telling them to put their phone down.

Senior Kate Howell said, "Having my phone by my side at all times during school has been challenging. It's hard not to glance at notifications or even click on them during class."

Students struggle to pay attention in class with the continuous instream of notifications and buzzing of phones. On Zoom, teachers are unable to see more



PHOTO BY MAX POTTER

Students continue to use technology even during class breaks.

than students' faces, and sometimes are unable to see students at all if their cameras are turned off. (The expectation is that cameras be kept on, but management of this expectation is tricky.)

The technological impact on the learning experience is becoming a topic of discussion among the student body at MVHRS because of waning attention spans, self

control, and motivation. "Students are talking about something that is so important," said Ms. FC, "which is intrinsic motivation. Students realizing that phones have been really distracting will help the student body to develop tools to deal with this. This is a reality of your world that affects no other generation." HSV

Seniors offer insight on college application process

BY CHLOE COMBRA AND BROOKE CROCKER

Every year, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) seniors complete college applications with the help of guidance counselors and teachers. The process is often lengthy and a learning experience for all. Seniors spoke to us about their experiences having just sent off the first wave of applications.

Students are first debriefed on their college application timeline by guidance counselors when they are freshmen. According to guidance director John Fiorito, the application can't be started until students are juniors, so resume building is encouraged in the first two years. Students have an easier time once they start their applications if they have a sufficient record to work with from previous years.

When assisting in the college application process, Mr. Fiorito encounters a lot of kids who focus on the reputation of a school or how competitive they think it is. "The whole guidance department works hard to have kids dig deeper and try to find schools based on their love for the school community, what they're getting out of the vibe of the student body, the location, and whether that school matches the interests that the student has," he said.

Senior Molly Menton, who is applying to nursing programs at several schools in Massachusetts, narrowed her 'choice schools' based on the rigor of each school's curriculum as well as other factors. "The three most important things to decide are if you want to be close to home or not, if you can



ILLUSTRATION BY MADELEINE BENGTSSON

actually afford to go to that school, and how good the school is for the major you want to study," she said.

Like Molly, senior Mia Jeffers chose which schools to apply to based on majors

she's considering: forensic science, technology, or criminology.

Her advice is to choose classes in high school that will serve you in college. "I have always been a science, math brain, so when I was a sophomore I doubled up in math, and this year I have doubled up in science," she said.

Mia recognized that grades are not the only component of the application that colleges see, and that class levels are often more important. "We've been told since we were freshmen that rigor is one of the most important things that col-

leges look at," she said. "So if you take a risk with an Advanced Placement (AP) class, it's okay if you get a B in that class. That can look better than getting an A in an honors class."

While the foundation of a college application is built on grades and test scores, the increasingly competitive nature of the selection process has driven kids to fill their resumes with a range of activities including community service, sports, and leadership positions at their school.

"I don't think grades on their own are enough," said senior Leo Neville, who plays two varsity sports, is student council president, and is involved in multiple clubs at the regional. "And a score on a test like the SATs is not going to be the most important thing on any application. It'll always be a bonus, but not the main thing [colleges] look at."

Despite multiple meetings

with guidance counselors throughout their high school careers, many students were still surprised by the intensity brought on by the college application process. Both Molly and Leo admitted the process took longer than they expected.

Molly advised saving time by limiting the number of schools you are applying to. "You should save time by just focusing on the schools you definitely want to go to and apply to them first."

Senior Eric Reubens strategically began his Common Application, which is a platform colleges use to allow students to submit their applications, in August before he had to turn his focus onto senior year work. "Definitely give yourself time," he said. "You don't want to cram in September or October. The summer is the best because you have some summer homework but you're not overwhelmed by senior year." HSV

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