

PDA: how much is too much?



By Andrea Scapini
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The two-minute warning bell is signal for juniors Mackenzie Snitgen and senior Jack Stefek to part.

It has become routine for the couple to share a hug and kiss. They recognize that public displays of affection (PDA) are shown in all forms in the hallways, but they say it's no big deal.

"I'm just comfortable, and he's comfortable. I know I'm not gross about it, and I'm not in anybody's way," Snitgen said. "I can still go without it, but it is a habit because if he didn't kiss me or hug me before I went to class, I'd be kind of like, 'what?'"

The couple said they try to ignore looks they sometimes receive from students and teachers after a brief kiss or when holding hands.

"I feel like people are watching me a little bit but it doesn't really affect me," Stefek said. "In some cases, others can be sometimes raunchy, and that's not supposed to be done in public. But if it's just a kiss or a hug, there's nothing to worry about."

Despite the fact that some publicly intimate couples aren't aware of their surroundings, their actions don't go unnoticed.

"Some couples look at each other and pretend like in the hour that they're going to be away from each other they're going to blow up. They're too touchy with each other," junior Valentina Izzi said. "If I had a boyfriend, I would not make out with them every hour before class. They act like they're not going to see each other for a whole week."

Other students think PDA is acceptable within reason.

"If they're holding onto you for a long time, it's just like, 'Get some air,'" junior Kaylin Causley said. "I feel like holding hands, or if you see them you hug them, or if they do a quick kiss before they leave, that's fine. But if you're getting way into it, it's not."

Izzi said she doesn't allow PDA to become a distraction to her. Junior Tess Kolp, however, is dis-

turbed by these displays in school.

"There are some forms of acceptable public displays of affection like small hugs that don't last too long, hand-holding, things like that. There are some people that take it way too far, which is really disgusting, and I'm quite uncomfortable from it," Kolp said. "Personally, I think it distracts from the purpose of being in school. You have a lot of time to do that outside of school. Focus on learning."

When staff members see affection in the hallways that pushes the school-appropriate limits, they take measures to stop the smooching.

"There's a time and a place for everything, and school is a time and a place for learning, not making out. I usually will just shout out, 'Hey, stop that! Boys have cooties. Girls have cooties,'" hall monitor Jaime Peralta said. "I try to make light out of it because I don't want to embarrass them, but it is actually against the school code of conduct. You are not supposed to have PDA in the hallways."

This behavior falls under "inappropriate physical behavior" in the student Code of Conduct.

Some staff members have noticed that many times, underclassmen engage in PDA more than the older students.

"There are others that you can tell it's probably new to them, the relationship, and they probably don't get a lot of contact outside of school," Peralta said. "It's probably the only place that they actually see each other during the day."

Assistant principal Tom Beach finds it important to stop PDA, especially amongst underclassmen.

"At this age, they're learning boundaries. They're learning about each other, and they're learning about society," Beach said. "Our job is to help them learn those rules because when they get into a job, they may feel that way about someone, but if they do some of the things that I've seen here, they're going to lose that job."

"So our job is to kind of help set those limits on themselves. I think it's natural that they're going to push those limits; that's what teenagers do. But most of the students are just fine."



The sound of SILENCE

Hard-of-hearing siblings
rely on each other to manage
their everyday lives



By Brigitte Smith & Chris Elliott
STAFF REPORTER & INTERN

Imagine a silent world: walking down the hallway seeing mouths moving without purpose.

"What was that?"

"It doesn't matter. Nevermind."

When junior Adam Roach was 3 years old, doctors discovered he had extreme hearing loss, which meant hearing aids for the rest of his life. Shortly after, his younger sister, freshman Sophia Roach, was diagnosed with the same hearing loss.

Due to their condition, they have learned to read lips.

"I hear through my eyes," Adam said.

But as anyone can imagine, lip-reading has its shortcomings; in classes, in the hallways and, for Adam, at wrestling practice.

"I have a hard time in class when the teacher is talking or we're taking notes," Adam said. "In practice, when coach tells them to do things like double-leg or single-leg stuff like that, and I would have to ask my teammates, like, 'What did he say?' And I would have to read their lips because I'm a lip reader."

Everyday communication can turn futile for Adam and Sophia.

"I mean, they ask me a question, and if I don't know what they said, I ask them again," Adam said. "You know they don't answer, they just look the other way, and I'm like whatever. And then I look the other way, too. It doesn't feel good, but what are you gonna do?"

These situations are inevitable. Since there is no way around their condition, both Adam and Sophia must put in extra time to keep up in class by asking their teachers for notes after class. But despite their efforts, school is still a struggle, both academically and socially. In their daily efforts to interact with others, numerous obstacles stifle communication between the Roach siblings and their peers.

"It's really hard with friends because either they are impatient because they don't want to repeat things, or they don't have any time to repeat things for me," Sophia said. "It's really hard to try to keep up in conversation, and it's really frustrating sometimes."

At the end of the day, all of the frustration that has

accumulated sometimes makes it difficult for Sophia to leave North with a smile on her face.

"If I had a bad day at school, I'll come home and be frustrated, and I'll tell my mom and get emotional and all," Sophia said.

Adam has learned to not be bothered so much and be patient with himself, both qualities Sophia says she has grown to appreciate.

"He's just laid back," Sophia said. "(Adam is) strong and a really good brother. I don't know what I would do without him. (He's) very positive. I just really look up to him."

Knowing that she has someone to fall back on who is enduring the same tribulations puts Sophia at ease.

"If I have a problem, I can go straight to him, and he'll give me advice. It's common sense, but when he tells me something, I'll just feel better about the situation and everything. He seems to handle it better than I do."

Even though Adam pushes those away who refuse to patiently work with him, he doesn't allow himself to feel inferior.

"I have learned to be more patient with myself, and I care less about other people that are not patient with me," Adam said.

There is a possibility that surgery could be an ultimate solution to the restrictions that limit them.

"I could get a Cochlear implant, but it involves surgery, and I don't know if I want to go down that path," Adam said.

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, the implant submits signals that are generated from a processor to an electrode array located within the head. From there, the impulses are sent to the correct auditory nerves. Because the sound is calculated through technology, it is not interpreted in the same way a human ear would decode it, so it takes time to "re-learn" how to hear.

This procedure doesn't completely restore a person's hearing, but if it works for the Roach siblings, it will greatly improve it.

After the appropriate recovery time, Adam may be able to talk on the phone and be able to engage in a conversation without depending on lip-reading.

The procedure may not go as planned, though.

"Something wrong might happen, and it might not im-

prove; I'm afraid of that," Adam said. "If I get the surgery, I will be deaf, completely deaf."

For about a month after the implant is surgically implemented, the ear will be completely deaf and Adam will not be able to hear anything out of that ear. Then, slowly on alternating weeks, the device will slowly be turned on and adjusted until it is at a comfortable volume.

"It's a lot of work, and I don't want to go through that, so I'm not sure," Adam said. "It's all up to me. My parents think I should do it but, again, I'm not sure."

Engaging in normal conversation is extremely frustrating for both Adam and Sophia, but they have hope that things won't be so hard in the future. They plan on going to a college in New York, Rochester Institute of Technology, a school that specializes in students that are hard of hearing.

"They are familiar with the hard of hearing, deaf kids, and they can provide you the help," Adam said. "They already know what you're going through. They can give you the help so you won't be as frustrated. And here they don't know what (to) do and they just push you away."

Sophia has been taking sign-language lessons and teaches her brother as she goes through the process. Alongside Sophia, Adam's girlfriend, senior Maria Vasquez said she, has been teaching herself and Adam sign language too. Vasquez said she supports Adam emotionally and helps him realize that there are people who want to help him.

"You know, there are just going to be some people who are like, 'Oh, you're just some deaf kid,' but you know those kids are jerks anyways. But I just remind him that there are people out there, like me, who don't mind slowing down and don't mind repeating themselves," Vasquez said.

Through their time together, Vasquez has come to recognize how much people take for granted in everyday life.

"Like, when someone's talking to you, especially a teacher, like if they face the whiteboard, I can hear everything they say, but Adam can't hear anything, he's like, 'Okay, as soon as you're not looking at me, I can't hear anything that you're saying.' So I think it's just like the simple things like that," Vasquez said. "It just shows me all the things we take for granted and all of the things to be thankful for."