

PHONES OFF, POINTS ON

Pocket Points app leads to less smartphone usage

Pocket Points is a new mobile application that grants students rewards for not using their phones during class. Once a student has created an account and is on their school campus, they can open the app, lock their phone and start earning points. Points are then used at local and online businesses for discounts, as well as in school for homework passes and extra credit.

This school year, sociology teacher Sandra Davis introduced Pocket Points to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Now, 60 teachers at MSD participate in the push for a cellphone-free learning environment.

"It is part of our positive behavior plan and rewards the students who have already been doing the right thing in class," Davis said. "It encourages others to stay off

their phones as well. It also engages their learning."

Pocket Points started in Northern California as an idea by Chico State University students, Mitch Gardner and Rob Richardson. Gardner and Richardson tried to create a solution to excessive smartphone usage in the classroom through the use of discounts to incentivize students. By partnering with local businesses that were willing to offer discounts through the app, Pocket Points was born.

Once the app launched, it quickly became popular among students at CSU. In the spring of 2015, the app's success caught the attention of over 100 universities across the nation who were interested in bringing Pocket Points to their campus.

Ever since, Pocket Points has been

expanding to additional schools because so many students, teachers and businesses are interested in the app. It is now offered in elementary, middle and high schools, as well as many colleges all around the United States and Canada.

Many students believe Pocket Points provide positive incentives for students to get off their phones during class and that the prizes offered are rewarding.

"I turn on my Pocket Points in class everyday because I know it will help me in the long run when I want to bump up my grade in a class," freshman Sophia Avron said.

On the other hand, some students think the system is unfair because some teachers offer the same incentives as another teacher for fewer or more points.

"I was disappointed when I saw that my



friend's math teacher offered a homework pass for 100 points, and my math teacher offered one for 200 points," Senior Zachary Williams said.

Overall, Pocket Points offers a rewarding incentive for students to remain offline during class. In response, teachers are finding more ways to incorporate Pocket Points into their classrooms. *Story by Tara Gaines; photo illustration by Emma Dowd*

BLOCK SCHEDULE BUZZ

MSD students adjust to new A/B block schedule

On Nov. 16, 2016, 80 percent of teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School voted to implement the 4X4 A/B block schedule for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. This year, students and staff get their first glimpse of the new schedule's impact on the school.

With the block schedule, students have alternating burgundy and silver days, each day consisting of four periods. Some students who experienced the previous schedule did not like the idea of the block at first, and vice versa, but some opinions have changed.

"At first, I was pretty excited about the block schedule, but now I feel like I'm being given more homework, and it is harder for me to manage my time along with my assignments," junior Sadhika Sarathy said.

Those against the block schedule believe the longer class periods can cause students to lose focus more quickly than the previous schedule. Also, some have an imbalance in difficulty from a silver to a burgundy day, making some days more stressful than others.

"It took so long for me to adjust to the new schedule because it's such a big change; I'm used to having all my classes in one day," Sarathy said. "I liked the 50 minute class time better because it was

shorter and easier to pay attention to each lesson."

To those in favor, the block schedule holds many benefits and is considered a fresh start. It gives students opportunities the previous schedule did not offer by adding a personalization period and more time in class to work on assignments and homework.

"I like the block schedule because it gives me a sufficient amount of time to do all the homework needed for my classes," junior Alondra Gittelsohn said. "Having a 90-minute class means that I am able to ask my teachers questions, so they can better explain the material."

It could also be helpful for those that have extracurricular activities and busier schedules outside of school, especially with the addition of the personalization period. With the personalization period, students are able to get ahead on their assignments and take makeup tests for days they have missed.

"Since I'm in marching band, I love having the personalization period because I am able to catch up on my work," sophomore Bianca Navas said.

Teachers are also affected by the block schedule and have their own thoughts about this change. Some classes may have a harder time keeping the students' attention, while others benefit from the

extended period.

"I think it is more difficult for students who are absent to make up their work and to keep up with what we are doing in class," art teacher Lauren Rosa said.

Teachers can use the 90-minute class period to elaborate on lessons, provide feedback and complete tasks without having to worry about continuing them the next day.

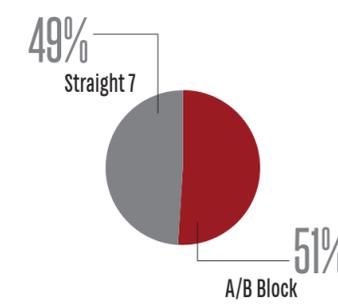
"For students, there is more chance and opportunity to use the time between the class, and the next class period to really work on things without having the pressure of eight classes of homework to take care of, and to manage your time correctly," English teacher Laurie Edgar said.

The future of the block schedule also has to be taken into consideration. The block schedule is confirmed to be in place for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Based on its success or failure, teachers will vote on whether to change or keep it.

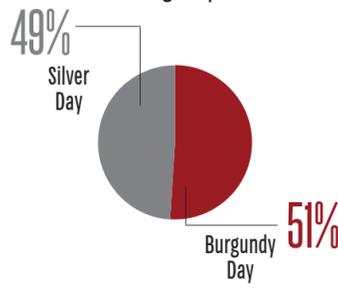
"I think that now the schedule is put into place, it is here to stay," Rosa said. "I'm being proactive about it instead of negative because there is no use in fighting it because it's here."

The block schedule has brought a different perspective to a typical school day. *Story by Anna Dittman*

Which schedule do you prefer, last year's straight 7 or this year's block?



Which day do you prefer, silver or burgundy?



*Based on 448 student respondents

GET IN THE ZONE

In order to prevent students from roaming the school during class time, students now have a colored hall pass on them at all times, each color corresponding to the zone they are supposed to be in.

These bathroom passes, which were Assistant Principal Winfred Porter's idea, provide a way to keep students in their designated areas.

"We had some issues with students being out of their assigned areas and kids roaming the hallways," Porter said. "I felt

that making zone passes would make it clearer for students to understand where they should be, when they should be there and what restrooms they could and could not use. I think the zone passes are going great. They make it very easy to identify kids by just looking at their pass."

During the 2016-2017 school year, 21 students received out-of-assigned area referrals.

"This has been something we have been talking about for the past few years and something we wanted to implement,"

Administration implements new color-coded bathroom pass system

Principal Ty Thompson said.

Student opinions on the colored hall passes vary. Some find the colored passes sensible and effective.

"I think the new zones improve our safety because there is no more messing around," senior Reshawn Campbell said.

Others students find the passes strict and unnecessary.

"I have never been asked by an administrator or security guard to show my colored pass; I do not think this benefits us at all," junior Allison Torres said.

Nevertheless, if a student is found out of their designated area, there are consequences that follow.

"If your out of you are assigned area, you are sent to your administrator. A phone call is made home, and we write a referral," Porter said. "The first time you get a warning, next you can get detention, and the third time you can end up in internal suspension."

As of Oct. 16, no students had received an out-of-assigned area referral. *Story by Jordyn Laudanno*

GET ON BOARD

MSD installs new screen technology throughout school

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School has been making major changes in order to modernize the campus. Over the summer of 2017, the school installed Recordex devices in several classrooms, which are large touch screen devices, in addition to the 10 classrooms that received them last year over spring break. In total, the school has installed 29 Recordex devices over the past two years.

These boards help students with class work and interactive lessons through updated software. They also allow teachers to access student computers via split screens and share screens.

"It helps the students interact; it gives them a better view of how to handle the lesson and prepares them better for the delivery of the lesson for the teachers," Assistant Principal Maximo Rosario said.

These boards come with features such as colorful pens, a video monitor and a touch screen feature that allows the students to expand their learning through color association and hands-on approaches such as interactive games and videos. Recordex devices also have their own wifi that can connect with computer carts in classrooms.

Recordex devices engage students in their classes through powerpoints displayed on the screen, lessons and high definition videos.

"The color pens help me learn because when the teacher underlines different sentences in colors, it allows me to

see the difference between the most important facts and the ones that are not as important," sophomore Hannah Levine said.

In addition to modernizing the classroom, the large screen enables everyone to see the board, even in wide classrooms.

"I have really bad eyesight and could never see the board when I was put in the back of the room, but now with the new Recordex Devices, I can see the board from wherever I am in the classroom," sophomore Rachel Nattis said.

However, some teachers feel that they should receive more training before the school takes a giant leap towards a more electronically-based learning environment.

"I definitely think it does not hurt to have more technology," English teacher Katherine Posada said. "But if you don't know how to use it, it's useless."

All teachers have access to this new technology, even if it is not in their individual classroom.

"In the library, I have made some positive changes to keep up with the times. I have [Recordex devices] set up in the library. If you reserve time, essentially everyone does have access to these boards," Media Specialist Diana Haneski said.

The Media Center received the first Recordex. It was tested there to see if the students and faculty saw these boards as an effective way to work, and if they would

like to see more in the future. Since they received positive feedback, the school started to install more.

"We want kids to be using them, not just teachers," Haneski said. "We want hands-on activities. Now we don't have to walk in front of a lamp [projector] on a cart. It allows the classrooms to be more interactive."

The Broward County School District offered Recordex devices to schools that were interested in piloting the technology. Normally, these devices cost \$5,000 each. The school did not pay for any of the devices and does not gain any revenue from using them, but they are interested in installing more in the future.

"The school is always trying to promote 21st century technology into the curriculum," Rosario said. "Technology changes really quickly, so it's difficult for schools to keep up with that. However, when we get the opportunity, we try to do that."

Over the past few years, the school has updated computers and incorporated technology in weekly curriculum through sources such as Canvas. Today, textbooks and other school supplies are often found online.

As the school is evolving, so is its technology. Instead of typical bulletin boards in the hallways, MSD has installed new School Live screens, which display



announcements and important dates, including club meeting times and football games.

"The purpose is to get messages out there, information, calendar dates so that way it lessens the amount of paper you're using. You can scroll and you can put a lot more information on it," leadership teacher Danielle Dricoll said.

There are three School Live screens in the school, which were free of charge and to MSD from School Live.

"The company is the one that installs them. If anything happens to them they take full responsibility for them. The only thing we have to do is update our school information," Driscoll said.

These new digital bulletin boards and the Recordex devices, offer to the school community access to new technologies. They are just one of many attempts to create a more modern and interactive learning environment. *Story by Leni Steinhardt; Photo by Delaney Tarr*

DITCHING DESKS

New desks arrive

Due to a growing need for classroom desks, Assistant Principal Jeff Morford led an effort to bring in new desks. Since the school does not order its desks personally, they rely on the county to

procure standard orders of new desks whenever the school feels it is necessary.

The Broward County School Board budgets for this need, which means Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School did not pay

a penny out of its own budget. The 250 new desks arrived on Sept. 28. At \$150 each, the total cost for the county stands at \$37,500. *Story by Lewis Mizen; Photo by Samantha Goldblum; Photo by Ryan Deitch*



BLOCK BANNERS

New flags remind students of silver and burgundy block schedule days

Corresponding with the new block schedule, a series of color-coordinated flags is the latest aesthetic feature to be added to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas campus. The flags indicate whether it is a silver or burgundy day in order to clarify the day's agenda for students adapting to the new schedule.

"I felt when we decided that we were going to go to block scheduling, and we were going to have silver and burgundy days, it was an easy way that I can help students and remind students what day it is," Principal Ty Thompson said. "So I went to the PTSA, and we decided to go ahead and purchase the flags and have the custodians change them out each day,"

The school currently has 12 flags: six

burgundy and six silver. Students can spot the flags in various locations such as the bus loop, main courtyard and senior courtyard.

Many students agree that the implementation of the flags is helpful in their day-to-day academic life, and that no flag has gone unnoticed.

"I think the flags are helpful because they remind me what day it is," freshman Ben Mayor said.

School administration hopes the flags will promote a more organized school year and help students stay on the right track. *Story by Mallory Mueller; Photo by Kevin Trejos*



BENCHED

New benches installed in front of school

Over the summer, the school purchased two new benches for the front car loop. The benches were funded through the PTSA and cost about \$1,000 each.

"I put two benches out in the front of the school to try promote kids to come out of the red gates after school to have a place to wait for a ride," Principal Ty Thompson said.

Along with the benches, Thompson decided to add new picnic tables in the art and main courtyard, due to the large number of students that sit on the floor during lunch. The purpose of the benches is to make



more seating available to the school's 3,304 students.

"I saw some new benches in the art courtyard. It's a good idea because now there are more seats during lunch," junior Allison Torres said.

As the year goes on, administration hopes to fund additional school beautification projects. *Story by Mallory Mueller; Photo by Kevin Trejos*