

In terms of PDA, when and where is it okay?

by Carly Travis

What's fun about high school, as opposed to middle school, is that anything goes when you're beyond the confines of the classroom.

Walking through the halls of New Trier, you're bound to happen upon the following: friends talking, theatre kids singing, a teacher conversing with a colleague, and the occasional couple kissing, hand-holding and hugging.

When it comes to public displays of affection (PDA), some couples do it, others refrain from it, and onlookers either abhor it or adore it. I, for one, am somewhere in the middle.

PDA ranges from full-on

make-out sessions to simply holding hands. The reason behind this behavior among couples varies as well. Some do it because they want to flaunt the strength of their relationship; others do it because they're genuinely passionate people who can't contain themselves, regardless of the time or place.

For onlookers, like my single self, however, I feel like I'm stuck in this middle ground. Displaying one's affection for another is meant to be an intimate moment. When

you put this moment in a public place, it can feel borderline intrusive.

You and your partner typically (and hopefully) exclude strangers when in the act, whatever that may be. When a third party (us) is invited in, there's a feeling of embarrassment.

In a sense, the couple turns everyone else into an unwilling audience, which can be discomforting.

However, not all kisses, hugs, and hand-holds are awkward for those looking. In fact, depending on the locale, an intimate moment can be really sweet.

The airport or train station is a perfect example of that. Those places are typical for greeting or departing, so when we witness a couple hugging it out, their back story all of the sudden surrounds them.

Is he stationed overseas? Does she travel for work and is never home with their

kids? Is this her first time going away to overnight camp? The intimacy feels more celebratory when distance is at stake.

I think public displays of affection are generally viewed as sweeter outside of school, probably because school isn't exactly "public."

When I have a personal connection to the couple I just saw cuddling, feelings of irritation run through me. Even if I don't know them, I tend to feel ashamed for the teachers that do.

When I'm on a city street amongst strangers, however, PDA is judged to be less shocking because it's much less "in your face". Cars are rushing by, trains roar overhead, music is heard from inside shops as doors open and close, you hear a piece of gossip as people briskly walk by, mid-conversation.

There's so much distraction that someone kissing on a bench can easily go unseen. Plus, I'm usually preoccupied and therefore more oblivious.

PDA doesn't have to be limited to kissing. People do everything in public.

Last year, junior year, which is by far the most "emotional" year of high school, I was working on a project for journalism. Let me preface this by saying it was one of those projects that could have been executed using

minimal effort, but I went in, full force, and basically tried as hard as possible.

Long story short, the assignment sent me to the Apple store because I took my SD card out of the slot before my footage was saved correctly (rookie mistake).

The Apple store, typically good at miracle working, couldn't salvage my footage and sent me on my way having to start the entire film over.

That evening, I walked through the mall crying hysterically (Re: junior year, very emotional). I didn't care who saw and actually liked the lack of privacy within such a personal moment.

It sounds counter-intuitive, but there's much more anonymity in numbers. It's less awkward to make-out in a large crowd rather than a quiet street with one lonesome person wandering by. The same goes for crying: would you rather cry in an empty coffee shop or in a crowded mall?

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, "I like large parties. They're so intimate. At small parties there isn't any privacy." The same goes for PDA. At school, it feels too personal. But in a train station or on a street corner, by all means, go for it.



ALLY BAILEY (JUNIOR) ON PDA: "I THINK THAT PDA IS OKAY IF YOU'RE DOING IT IN A MORE PRIVATE AREA. AS LONG AS IT'S NOT DISTRACTING, BY ALL MEANS, YOU DO YOU."



GRACEE WALLACH (SENIOR) ON PDA: "SOPHOMORE YEAR I MADE A PETITION TO REGULATE PDA AROUND THE SCHOOL. IF YOU CAN FEEL THE SEXUAL TENSION, THEN THEY SHOULDN'T BE DOING IT IN FRONT OF YOU."



ATHENA VASSILOS (SENIOR) ON PDA: "I HATE PDA. YOU CAN HOLD HANDS BUT ANYTHING ELSE IS TOO MUCH."

AVI HOROWITZ (SOPHOMORE) ON PDA: "I WAS SURPRISED BECAUSE EVERYONE SAYS THERE'S A LOT OF IT, BUT I HAVEN'T REALLY SEEN IT AROUND NEW TRIER THAT MUCH."



ANTHONY CRESAP (SENIOR) ON PDA: "WHEN TONGUES GET INVOLVED OR WHEN THEY HAVE THAT LOOK IN THEIR EYES WHEN THEY TOUCH EACH OTHER."



DAVID LACKEY (JUNIOR) ON PDA: "I THINK IT BECOMES TOO MUCH WHEN I SEE MY FELLOW ADVISEE LEAVE ADVISORY EARLY TO GO SEE HIS GIRLFRIEND."



The thing is, breaking up is complicated

by Melanie Mandell

"I just don't want to do this anymore," she said. "I think we should see other people." "Oh, al-right. If that's what you want. Can I ask why?" he responded.

The two continue to discuss the downfall of their relationship, and go their separate ways after a painfully awkward hug. Whether or not this was a breakup or the end of a "thing" is unclear, but post-split etiquette is definitely more serious after a relationship.

These days everyone is familiar with what a relationship is and how it begins, but a lot of people aren't exactly sure what a "thing" is defined as.

"A thing is when two people are exclusively hooking up with each other and like each other, but aren't serious enough to be dating," senior Bella Miller said. "After people hook up about three times within a certain period of time, they're usually considered to be in a 'thing.'"

When New Trier students are asked about the difference between the end of a relationship and the

end of a thing, they were able to come up with pretty big differences.

"Of course there is more emotional healing needed after the end of a long term relationship," an anonymous junior boy said. "There's also the issue of dealing with all of the pictures and gifts that you have from that person. You usually don't end up with so many reminders of the other person at the end of a thing."

The lack of emotional "trauma" is something that a lot of students find comforting about having a "thing" instead of a relationship.

"Yeah it sucks when someone says they don't want to be with you anymore, but a thing is so much less damaging than a relationship," an anonymous sophomore girl said. "One night of girl support is enough to get me over a thing, but relationships definitely take a lot more time."

"There's a much needed buffer period after a relationship where both people take time to heal and recover. The fact that so many people know when you're in a relationship and when it ends makes it a lot harder to deal with," two senior girls agreed.

The ability to be friends

post-relationship is something that also varies between the two.

"When I end a relationship, it takes a lot longer to become friends with my ex than it would at the end of a thing," a senior girl said. "Obviously it varies from couple to couple, but since things are so much more casual, they're usually easier to end and to recover from."

However, there are similarities between the end of a thing and the end of a relationship. A big similarity is the tension between friend groups.

"When two people from different friend groups split up, there is a lot of animosity between those groups, even if it's only a few friends, the tension is definitely noticeable," a senior boy said. "There's a lot of dirty looks exchanged in the halls, which sounds petty, but it does happen."

"It's definitely hard for two people to be friends immediately after a relationship and after a thing. It can happen some -

times, but usually there's no talking and they try to avoid each other at all costs for a while," an anonymous sophomore boy said.

While there are many differences and similarities between being in a relationship and being in a 'thing,' neither one is objectively better. "If you don't want to be in a relationship, that's cool, and if you don't like being in a thing, that's cool too. You do you," senior Brendan Loftus said.

