

Seattle students virtually Zoom into space for a chat with astronaut Megan McArthur

October 22 2021, by Alan Berner



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The students gathered at the Museum of Flight in Seattle were ready to ask Megan McArthur questions, via video link, about life as an astronaut. She was about as far away as Walla Walla—but in outer space.

McArthur is a NASA astronaut aboard the International Space Station, moving above the Earth at more than 17,500 mph, orbiting every 90 minutes.

Just before the video connection was made for the Saturday event, former astronaut Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger, an astronaut from 2004 to 2014, spoke about life aboard the [space station](#) and was asked, of course, everyone's favorite question: How do you go to the bathroom in [space](#)?

The answer: There are spacesuit hookups and funnels and toilets. Nothing floats free.

She was asked about the space station's size, and replied that it was a surprise to her how large it was. It's about the size of a soccer field, and the crew quarters—seven [astronauts](#) are currently at the station—are about the size of the interior of a Boeing 747 jumbo jet.

Then from space came a question: "Dottie, can you read me?"

"Loud and clear," said Metcalf-Lindenburger.

One by one, 10 students attending programs at the Museum of Flight's Boeing Academy for STEM Learning asked McArthur questions.

McArthur, an oceanographer and engineer, has flown a space shuttle mission and a SpaceX mission. She holds a bachelor's degree in [aerospace engineering](#) from UCLA and a Ph.D. in oceanography from the University of California, San Diego, and conducted research at Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

"Out of ... the colleges you've attended, which do you think has the best programs?" wondered student Laniyah Ezell.

McArthur provided a diplomatic answer: Choose a school based on goals and aspirations.

She said she always wanted to be an astronaut.

"Are there any specifics that we should keep in mind if we are aspiring to be an astronaut?" high school junior Naazneen Vemmerath Kulangara asked.

McArthur said she wasn't always patient but had to learn to "be a patient person with [herself] and with the team."

She also told the [students](#) they can learn to do things they never knew they were capable of. McArthur learned to draw her own blood and others' on board.

She discussed space food, like a chicken salad wrap and a fruit salad—"quite a nice bistro lunch." Metcalf-Lindenburger said that sounded like an improvement over her time in the space station.

As McArthur spoke from a weightless environment and her hair rose up behind her, a few objects floated by—one looked like a stuffed toy, and the other was a small robot.

But the biggest surprise that floated by was when two other astronauts photobombed the half-hour session.

©2021 The Seattle Times.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Seattle students virtually Zoom into space for a chat with astronaut Megan McArthur (2021, October 22) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-10-seattle-students-virtually-space-chat.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.