

Security Camera Questions and Answers – 11/28/11

1. Can someone “FOIL” request the videos?

No. They are not public records as they meet the student records (FERPA) and health and safety exception of FOIL.

2. We have developed a culture of discussion between students and administrators about raising concerns seen in school. Will this create a false sense of security?

No. Based on experience we have seen that it creates a sense of security that when combined with a culture of trust that is supported by good choices and positive social relationships, will improve overall safety, security, and focus.

3. Will this create an opportunity for 5 minutes of fame?

No. No one views the tape other than the subject, the administrator, and possibly the parents. We have not seen this on the buses either, and do not anticipate any different at the schools.

4. Is there data to support use of the cameras?

Yes. There is the quantitative and qualitative data on the web page and professional knowledge of the resolutions that will occur, the time saved in disrupting the educational process for investigations (principals, teachers, staff, asset protection).

5. The educational process Security vs. surveillance? Is there a difference in intended use based on the language of the policy?

Yes, and the language was changed from the original draft to reflect the actual use. These cameras and the recordings will predominantly be used as a silent witness that will allow administrators to view what has happened in a particular area. Surveillance, which is the active monitoring of events, will occur rarely, but most likely during heightened threat levels (active trespass, threat of external dangerous person coming to campus, active police investigation near campus, other lockdown).

6. Can it be viewed live?

Yes, but this would usually occur during heightened threat levels as discussed in the previous question.

7. The procedure was not developed according to the normal development and presentation of policies. Why was this not followed?

As policy Committee Chair Aziza Benson indicated, the committee did not find an agreeable time to meet before the first meeting, and she also thought the committee could benefit from public input before meeting. This was supported by the majority of the committee. The Policy Committee did meet on Friday, November 18 after the First Reading. The revised policy is posted online. In addition, there are other potential revisions that will take place before the second reading, now tentatively planned for the December 12 Board Meeting.

8. Has there been a needs assessment?

There exists no formal document; however, the Leadership Team, Facilities Committee, and Board of Education very seriously considered the needs, along with professional consultation, before including the security initiative.

9. Do we have excessive theft, bullying, intruder issues, violence?

We have had as many that are needed for the principals to recommend additional tools to deal with those that do occur. Principals may want to provide additional comments here.

10. What security threats will the cameras address?

Information regarding this question was presented at a previous board meeting. Also...

Deterrence and strong evidence for the following:

- Vandalism, outsiders on campus, fights, harassment and bullying, drug dealing, weapons possession, theft, alcohol possession and use, corroboration for reasonable suspicion related to searches, parking lot issues (i.e. missing students, creepers, illegal exit or entry to campus), teacher and staff safety – especially after hours and on weekends.

11. How will the system be maintained and staffed?

Current technology staff will handle technical components and administrators will operate it.

12. Have you completed a cost/benefit analysis?

Nothing formal, but our largest impact will be in saving time and bringing resolution to incidents that disrupt culture and personal safety.

13. What is the cost to staff this system?

There are no additional staff costs to operate the system.

14. Do we want to be putting \$ into the set-up, maintenance & personnel, is it necessary for a school of our size?

Yes. The Facilities Committee and Board of Education made this decision when it was recommended to be part of the Capital Project.

15. Will there be cameras outside the nurse & psychologist offices?

Cameras could possibly be in the hallways outside these offices as they are in a main hallway near an exit/entrance where there is no expectation of privacy. This is a multi-function office suite in which students and staff enter for many reasons.

16. Why are cameras being planned for the pool?

Having a camera in the pool area could deter unauthorized dangerous use without supervision and provide a silent witness in the case of a catastrophic event.

17. How will the cameras help stop verbal bullying?

Cameras are another tool for administrators in combating this inappropriate and damaging conduct. For example, video footage could corroborate claims of harassment by showing certain individuals were in areas proximal to those indicated in witness statements, thereby adding to the total picture of the truth. They may also show nonverbal conduct and reactions that could be similarly corroborative.

18. Will changes to number of cameras or camera technology come before the board prior to implementation?

The current draft of the policy indicates that the Safety Team will discuss recommendations for any changes for inclusion into the safety plan. There is no special requirement or policy that would cause the Board to have to specifically approve such changes at this time.

19. Why weren't cameras specifically stated on the capital project proposition?

Propositions for capital projects do not contain specific information about the project. The accompanying literature and information related to the project contain most of the details that the public uses to inform their decision.

20. Whether cameras have been installed yet at Buckley Elementary and/or the Middle School and, if so, are they in interior areas, other than pointing toward the entrance ways, as well as exterior locations? Most of the discussion has been centered on the high school due to the location of cameras in interior hallways and information on the other two buildings has been almost non-existent.

Cameras are installed at Buckley pointing on entrances and playgrounds.

21. Why are there not cameras on the athletic fields since you are planning to have them in the pool area?

The fields do not pose the same threat as the pool and the footprint of coverage is too broad to provide any significant effect.

22. Who comprises the School District's District-wide Safety Team, which is referred to on line 25 of the Policy. Perhaps the definition of the members (e.g. Superintendent, 3 Board members, etc.) of the School District's District-wide Safety Team can be added to the Policy, or can refer to the location of this information.

There is no charter that defines precisely who is on the team; however, the Team is currently comprised of two board members, the Superintendent, the School Business Administrator, Union representatives, key district personnel in the area of emergency management, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, Supervisor of Transportation, and Supervisor of Food Services.

23. When I spoke at the meeting, I suggested that the policy include:
- a) That “Security cameras will not be used to evaluate employee performance unless a formal investigation results in a determination that a safety issue may exist”. (wording taken from SUNY Oneonta Camera Use policy)

Again, there is no expectation of privacy in the areas that are being recorded. In addition, cameras could be used to investigate and/or corroborate or dispel claims of employee misconduct.

- b) That the full Board be apprised prior to acquisition of additional cameras (for new locations, not replacement equipment), change to location of cameras, or change to type of camera (e.g. from fixed to point/tilt/zoom).

The second item may seem unduly restrictive; however the policy must cover the District for the future as well as the present, and should be proactive in prevention of possible misunderstandings or even abuses. I would hate to find out after the fact that cameras had been installed in places that were more sensitive, such as classrooms or the nurse’s office, without an opportunity for the public to have notification.