

After our December BoE meeting when we approved our security cameras and audio equipment, some questions came up about the need for these items. Doug Vander Linden, USD 244 district technology director, and I have answered the questions below. We hope the readers find this information helpful.

When and how did this topic first arise?

The Burlington School District had a security system in place from 2004 through 2012. The system was an analog-based DVR system that was very limited in its features and capabilities. When the DVR system crashed, we were no longer able to get parts as the company had gone out of business. We had hoped to replace our system with grant funding. However, as you will read below, that did not happen. Over the past 10 years, school funding became a challenge. We haven't been able to do this project until now.

This has been a focus of the schools in Coffey County and a project discussed by the CoffeyCAN Fiber Board since early 2009. The Fiber Board and the Coffey County Commission submitted a Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant back in May of 2009. Although we did not receive this 50% match grant, we continued to focus on ways to bring this project back to a reality. It has been a topic for several years with that board.

USD 244 received a grant from KSDE (Kansas State Department of Education) in the summer of 2019 for \$15,786 that will be used for this security camera project. USD 244 will look to pursue other grant funding in the future.

In the past four years, USD 244 has used video cameras on buses for student and staff safety. Video has been very helpful when dealing with difficult situations.

Members of the Coffey CAN Fiber Board over the past year have individually installed security systems and/or updated their systems. We agreed to a single hardware/software standard based on the HikVision standard. USD #243 and USD #245 have already implemented their systems. The Coffey County Courthouse also did a system upgrade the past year on both their main courthouse and jail. The Coffey County Libraries and the Coffey County Health Systems Hospital will be looking at their own systems and upgrades in the year to come.

The county-wide systems will also have a monitoring feature that allows the Coffey County Dispatch Center at the courthouse to be able to have eyes inside the building in the event of an after-hours alert or a crisis situation.

When was this idea first discussed at a school board meeting, to begin monitoring? (What was the date of the meeting? Was it discussed in open session?)

This is a project that we have had in our 5-Year Capital Outlay report that is shared with the board of education in November each year. We have discussed district safety and security each year that I have been here. We purchased a keyless fob entry system with video cameras at main entrances into buildings for BES, BMS, and BHS to improve safety in our buildings. We have discussed school safety at board retreats to start each year in the four years I have been the superintendent. The board of education is very much in favor of any safety measures we can put in place to keep our students and staff safe.

The October and November 2019 Board Technology Reports included details on the project and the bid process that we were undertaking. Bids were posted on the District website for 4 weeks in November and December. Technology Director Doug Vander Linden also presented a verbal update in both October and November about this project and its phases.

Was there an event that prompted the idea of purchasing audio/video surveillance?

There wasn't one specific event in the district. There have been many different issues that our building administrators have had to deal with over the past four years since I have been superintendent that they have told me that video cameras would have been very helpful when dealing with situations. Security cameras have become commonplace in schools and businesses.

Are other school districts our size implementing this practice? Are any other Pioneer League schools implementing this practice?

Every school in the Pioneer League has a video security system in place in their district. Every school in Coffey County except for Burlington has a security system in place. South Lyon County also has video security systems in place. Schools throughout the state are putting in these systems to keep their campuses safe and secure.

If you have spoken with any other schools who are implementing this practice, what has been their experience with it? Do they consider this practice beneficial?

100% of the school district administrators that I have spoken with have told us that these security systems are a must in today's world.

Did any other districts have any challenges with it? If so, did they say how they handled them and is there anything Burlington will be doing to potentially prevent such challenges or be prepared for them?

No challenges so far have been reported from other districts.

Why does the school board/administrators believe this monitoring is necessary?

It is impossible for our administrators and staff to be everywhere in all of the buildings. Camera systems will, hopefully, help kids make good decisions. If kids don't make good decisions, administrators will have the support of audio and/or video evidence so they don't have to spend a lot of time questioning many witnesses to determine what happened with a certain situation.

Will the audio or video surveillance include classrooms? Where else will be monitored?

Classrooms under state statute may not be recorded (audio and/or video) without permission. Public use areas and the outside of the building is the focus of the security system.

Will audio/video recording be done at the high school, middle school and elementary school? What about the board office?

All three school buildings are slated to have systems over the next 12-18 months. We will be looking at the Bus Barn/Stadium and the District Office after the three buildings are complete.

If this practice is going to be done at only the high school at first (from the discussion regarding the bid at the December BOE meeting, it sounded like it will be BHS only at first), how long will this be implemented at the high school before a decision is made to implement it at BMS, BES and or the board office and what determining factor(s), if any, will there be in deciding whether to implement it in other buildings?

All three buildings will have camera security systems in place in the near future.

What is the timeline on implementing this?

Our goal is to have a functional system in place by spring break 2020 at BHS. BMS and BES will, hopefully, be completed in the next 12-18 months.

Will a third party be monitoring the audio or video? If so, who? Will the school hire someone to monitor audio/video?

No third party will be monitoring audio or video. No additional staff will be hired to monitor these systems. Video monitors will be visible in each office, and school administrators will have access to all the cameras and the recorded video/audio. Law enforcement dispatch will be able to utilize the audio/video equipment in our buildings only if needed in case of an emergency. This will help to give them eyes and ears in our buildings and assist them in keeping their personnel safe in case of extreme situations.

What will be the annual cost of monitoring audio/video?

There will not be an annual cost.

Will additional costs be incurred by purchasing equipment to monitor?

No annual fees for the system. We will have hardware replacement/upgrades if there is a technical issue that might occur outside the warranty period.

What is legal when it comes to privacy laws and audio recording adults and students (under age)?

KASB (Kansas Association of School Board) attorneys have let us know that public audio and video security systems do not violate any privacy laws. There is very limited expectation of privacy in public places. Audio and video security systems WILL NOT be in places like restrooms where privacy is expected.

How will the board justify spending \$80,000+ on purchasing audio/video surveillance? Some patrons believe the purchase and implementation of audio/video recording doesn't contribute to the learning environment.

My question would be--How could we not justify spending this money to help keep our students and staff safe? Bullying has been a topic of conversation throughout the state of Kansas over the past few years. Cameras will help us deal with bullying accusations. Cameras will also help us with information gathering for those students who choose to make bad choices. Vaping/juuling has been a hot topic in our state and throughout the nation in the past few months. We feel that providing the safest and most secure school district possible helps everyone

If you ever have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at your convenience at cmarshall@usd244ks.org or call at 620-364-8478 Ext. 3040.

GO CATS!

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