Partnership Alliance for Safer Schools

WHITE PAPER: The Future of Cameras in Classrooms

The volunteers who make up the Partnership Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) bring together their research and expertise from the education, public safety and industry communities to develop and support a coordinated approach to make effective use of proven security practices for schools. The PASS team is also dedicated to developing white papers on specific, school-safety topics.

The content in these white papers may point to specific products, brands, or organizations as illustrations of how certain safety and security measures are implemented. PASS does not endorse specific products or brands. Together, the volunteers and partners of the PASS share a single vision: making all schools safer is both achievable and urgently needed.

AUTHORS

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KEY TOPIC

Security cameras are becoming increasingly more common in many aspects of school operations. In this white paper, you will learn about the controversies of cameras, emerging technologies, and how cameras can benefit a classroom learning environment.

PROBLEM SOLVED

We aim to educate security professionals about classroom cameras and provide solutions for them to take the next steps in exploring or implementing cameras in classrooms.

RELEVANT PASS GUIDELINES SECTION

VII. Classroom/Interior Perimeter Layer:

MOST RELEVANT FOR

- K-12 security directors

TIME TO READ

5-7 minutes

Introduction

While security cameras in the classroom can certainly be a very controversial topic, they have become a vital component of school safety protocols. When done thoughtfully, implementing modern camera technology within classrooms can enhance security and contribute significantly to a safer learning environment. This white paper explores the complexities surrounding the use of cameras in schools, discusses emerging technologies that enhance their effectiveness, and outlines the potential benefits and critical considerations for successful implementation.

The introduction of cameras in classrooms often brings forth significant debate. Key concerns include privacy; the use, accessibility, and oversight of recorded material; and whether audio recording is included. It is essential to navigate these issues carefully, ensuring compliance with legal standards and safeguarding individual rights. Given that laws surrounding cameras can vary widely from state to state, we recommend consulting your legal team to ensure that all privacy regulations, including FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), are thoroughly understood and adhered to.

Emerging Technology and Classroom Safety: The Role of Security Cameras

Classroom cameras can offer numerous benefits for K-12 schools. In pilot programs, school administrators reported an estimated 20% reduction in investigation time is not uncommon

when using cameras to supplement the investigation. Their advanced search capabilities significantly streamline the process for school leaders, allowing them to quickly locate relevant video footage. For instance, if a purse is taken from a desk, many systems have basic analytics that detect motion, enabling users to set a grid around the item or door entryway and specify a time frame to review the footage efficiently. With real-time search capabilities, administrators can identify incidents within seconds, compared to the extensive effort previously required.

Another example is the use of cameras to identify individuals involved in behavioral incidents such as bullying or physical altercations. There are also emerging AI analytics that can be used for weapons detection and behavior monitoring that can be used to proactively notify appropriate staff as incidents occur.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) can be protected through the use of video redaction, enabling school administrators to perform real-time and retrospective redaction while still enabling effective incident review. For example, footage can capture a scene — such as during a fight among children — but sensitive details about individuals involved can be obscured.

As you move forward, it will be essential to establish clear policies and procedures regarding video retention, access permissions, and review processes.

Building Consensus: Engaging Stakeholders in Security Implementation

Implementing classroom cameras should be a deliberate and thoughtful process. Gathering proactive feedback from trusted partners is crucial. This includes engaging with your school safety team, IT infrastructure, and possibly local law enforcement. It's important to involve a diverse range of stakeholders, such as student councils, parent focus groups, and teachers, to ensure everyone is on board. Gaining early support from teachers is essential for successful change management, so consider forming a district-wide working group to facilitate collaboration and input.

Before approaching vendors, your cross-functional team should clearly define the purpose of the cameras and identify key issues. Engaging with multiple vendors will provide insights into their products and how they can meet your needs. It's also vital to understand the legal requirements for camera use in your jurisdiction and to develop policies regarding access, management, and compliance. Additionally, posting signage to inform visitors about the presence of cameras is both a best practice and an effective deterrent.

Evolving Perspectives: The Journey From Resistance to the Norm

It's worth noting that similar resistance was observed when police departments implemented body and dash cameras. Initially, some officers and police unions were concerned about how these devices would impact their interactions with the public, fearing that constant recording could lead to misinterpretations of their actions and decisions. Additionally, there were worries about privacy, accountability, and the potential for misuse of footage. However, over time, the benefits of these technologies became increasingly apparent. Officers began to recognize that body and dash cameras could serve as valuable tools for transparency and accountability, helping to protect them from false allegations while also providing an objective record of events.

As technology evolved, so did the capabilities of these cameras. Advanced features such as real-time monitoring, automatic activation in high-stress situations, and cloud storage solutions made it easier for law enforcement to manage and utilize the footage effectively. The introduction of analytics and artificial

intelligence further enhanced their utility, allowing departments to analyze patterns in data, improve training, and develop strategies for community engagement.

In the context of classroom security cameras, similar advancements can enhance safety by allowing real-time monitoring for potential threats, such as intruders or emergencies. Just as police departments learned to leverage body and dash cameras for better situational awareness and response, schools can utilize classroom cameras to provide immediate footage to law enforcement when necessary. This proactive approach not only fosters a safer environment for students and staff, but also helps build trust within the community by demonstrating a commitment to transparency and safety.

Conclusion

Classroom cameras can support effective classroom management and provide documentation in cases of alleged inappropriate conduct. They can help verify student behavior during extreme outbursts, aiding in disciplinary decisions.

Classroom cameras can have a meaningful impact on a safe and secure learning environment if the proper process is identified and followed. The PASS (Partner Alliance for Safer Schools) Guidelines serve as a valuable resource for K-12 administrators and safety personnel aiming to effectively deploy and manage these systems. Should you need additional support, please contact the PASS team, and someone will be happy to help.

References

PASS Safety and Security Guidelines

Harvard Business Review: *Change management: Choosing Strategies for Change*