

10 Questions That Should Be Asked At Every School Board Meeting Where Student Surveillance Technologies Are Under Consideration

1. What is the precise and specific problem the school is seeking to address by potentially using a student surveillance technology?¹
2. What are the proven, documented benefits of using the student surveillance technology?
3. In determining the student surveillance technology's benefits, to what extent did the school rely on potentially biased information that was provided by persons who market surveillance products?
4. In determining the student surveillance technology's benefits, did the school rely on and give far greater weight to unbiased, dependable information and analysis that was prepared by persons with no financial interest in surveillance technologies or the outcome of our school's decision?
5. Are you aware that the overwhelming majority of the research on surveillance has concluded that surveillance technologies do not have any significant deterrent effect on bad or harmful conduct?
6. What are the surveillance technology's total financial costs, including the costs of acquisition, operation, maintenance, and ongoing related costs like data storage?
7. What alternative safety, health, and/or educational options might our school have to forgo if resources are spent on a surveillance technology?
8. Do any of the alternative options we might have to forgo have more reliably established benefits, or a better benefits-to-costs/harms ratio, than the student surveillance technology under consideration?
9. What unintended harms might the use of the student surveillance technology cause to the general student population, as well as to any specific groups of already vulnerable students?
10. Have you undertaken an analysis of whether the proposed student surveillance technology's proven benefits outweigh its costs and harms in light of the specific problem the school district is seeking to address, and what was your determination?²

1 Insist on a detailed and precise answer. While "to safely and respectfully identify students in need of mental health interventions and to provide those interventions in a timely and supportive manner while respecting student privacy" would be an acceptable framing, "to keep students safe from themselves and others" would not.

2 Insist on a detailed answer. Do not accept answers like, "yes, we engaged in an analysis and determined its benefits outweigh its costs."