

# Model School Board Policy for the Consideration of Student Surveillance Technologies

Whereas, [NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT] believes adopting a consistent, thoughtful approach to how we consider the use of student surveillance technologies, which emphasizes well-informed decision-making based upon reliable, unbiased information and analysis, will result in wiser decisions and better outcomes for our school district and community.

[NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT] hereby adopts the following procedures, which shall be followed any time the school district is considering the acquisition or use of a student surveillance technology:

## STEP ONE

### Define the Precise Problem the School District is Seeking to Address

In defining the problem the school district is seeking to address, and for which a student surveillance technology is being considered as a potential intervention, school district officials shall avoid vague, broad, or ambiguous descriptions, such as “keep students safe,” as such definitions can lead to the adoption of interventions that are not well-suited to provide the benefit the school district is seeking.

Instead, school district officials shall define the problem to be addressed as precisely as possible. So, for example, a precise definition like “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” is far preferable to “keeping students safe from themselves and others.”

## STEP TWO

### Evaluate the Proposed Student Surveillance Technology’s Actual Benefits and Costs/ Harms in Light of the Specific Problem to Be Addressed

In making a determination about the efficacy of any surveillance technology, school district officials shall not rely on the testimony, research, or analysis of any person or entity that stands to profit from the school district’s acquisition or use of the surveillance technology.

Instead, school district officials should seek to answer the following questions by relying only on unbiased, reliable, verifiable information and analysis:

- What are the proven, evidence-based benefits of the surveillance technology, if any, when it comes to addressing the specific problem the school district is seeking to address? In answering this efficacy question, school district officials should beware of relying on surveillance industry produced or funded studies that are designed to appear independent.
- What are the surveillance technology’s financial costs? Such costs should include acquisition, operations, maintenance, and data storage.
- What are the opportunity costs of investing in the surveillance technology? To answer this question, school district officials shall consider and evaluate what alternative safety, health, and/or educational options the school district may have to forgo if resources are spent on a surveillance technology option.

- What unintended harms might the use of the surveillance technology cause to students (and other school community members) that other interventions would not? In conducting this analysis, school district officials shall determine what harms may be caused to the general student population as well as what harms may be caused to specific groups of already vulnerable students.

### STEP THREE

#### **Seek Input from the Entire School District Community**

When the school district has completed the above two steps, it should share the information it learned, and its initial analysis of that information, with the school district's community members.

After the school district's community members have been provided an adequate time to review and digest the information, the school district shall solicit community members' input at a well-noticed public meeting in which questions can be asked and opinions can be freely shared with school district officials and other interested community members.

### STEP FOUR

#### **Conduct a Final Benefits Versus Costs/Harms Analysis**

After completing the above three steps, if the school district still wishes to consider using a student surveillance technology, it shall undertake a benefits versus costs/harms analysis. Such an analysis shall rely solely on unbiased, evidence-based determinations regarding the benefits, costs, and harms of the proposed student surveillance technology.

The question the school district shall answer in this final step is "does 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?"

Where the costs/harms of the student surveillance technology, including its opportunity costs, exceed its proven benefits, or where an alternative intervention has a better benefits-to-costs/harms ratio, the student surveillance intervention shall be rejected. In all other circumstances, school district officials shall exercise their best judgement in light of their obligations to all members of the school district community.