



Fairfax Zero Tolerance Reform

Mission: Transform the Fairfax County Public School discipline system from a criminal and punitive approach to a restorative, educational, and therapeutic process by working with families, FCPS, county staff, civil rights and child development specialists, and legal representatives.

GET THE FACTS ON SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

- 1. Cameras do not build trust or respect.** We want our kids to be connected to their schools and to build healthy relationships with their teachers and principals. Cameras destroy that relationship.
- 2. Cameras are a lazy response to missing leadership.** By using “cameras” as an “answer” for alleged misbehavior, these administrators abrogate their responsibility to ask what is going on in their schools that causes any behavior they are concerned about.
- 3. This is about punishment, not prevention.** Camera use perpetuates a punitive culture in this system. In 2010, there were 69,430 recorded incidents – mostly minor – that staff had to take time to document. There is no due process in the discipline system that guarantees camera “evidence” will consider students as innocent first. Cameras will perpetuate a punitive culture instead of creating a restorative one.
- 4. There is no objective evidence that cameras inside schools prevent misbehavior.**
Principals themselves admit this by stating in their proposal "While there is an absence of scientific studies to investigate the effectiveness, local analysis suggests that there is a clear benefit." That "local analysis" is based on seeing some reduction in the costs of cleaning up vandalism after installation of external cameras at nine schools. Most studies supporting camera use are by camera vendors.
- 5. Cameras will not be a “workforce multiplier for staff”** because there are no plans to reduce cafeteria oversight by humans, who are supposed to be interacting with kids and building connections.
- 6. There is already evidence of discriminatory use.** The principal at nearly-all-white Langley HS says it doesn't have behavior problems that warrant cameras. Data already show discrimination in the use of suspensions. It is a small leap to imagine camera use would follow that pattern.
- 7. Camera shots are not objective.** To be at all objective, you need many camera angles plus audio. Courts always consider missing video to be exculpatory, which means judges know they can be misused and warrant defendants innocence until proven guilty.
- 8. Cameras were not “accepted” by our neighboring jurisdictions.** In Montgomery Co., parents were furious when they were installed without their input – or that of the school board. Why are administrators so quick to follow these neighboring (bad) practices when they eschew others as unimportant? (Later HS start times, for example?)
- 9. We should spend the surprisingly “found” \$3.24 million for cameras on making PBIS work effectively.** When it does, it creates a learning environment that is engaging, responsive, preventive, and productive. But PBIS is in place in only some FCPS schools and it is up to principals to use as they see fit. Principals have not developed baseline criteria and they self-report results. PBIS here has little fidelity to best practices. It could. See www.PBIS.org for more on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.
- 10. Principals have irresponsibly fomented fear to support invasive cameras.** They have conjured a county full of potentially incendiary teens ready to incite "flash mobs" and take over school cafeterias and hallways. They have conjured hallways filled with thieves. Fairfax has 27 high schools: Over the last two years, it had 34,200 lunch periods and 16 food fights at 8 schools. That's an incidence rate of .00004. And there is no evidence that cameras are needed to reduce actual crime in schools. If this is such a big concern, why are we hearing about it “in public” only now? Why haven't parents and others been invited to help resolve it? The motivations here raise red flags.