

REPORT
TDSB Ward 10
Parent Committee to Evaluate the Pilot Project
of Video Screens in High Schools

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Submitted by:

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Evaluating the Pilot Project of Video Screens in High Schools

Method of gathering parent comments:

In January 2010 a group of parents from Ward 10 volunteered to be part of a committee that would evaluate the video screens in high schools in Ward 10. This group consisted initially of parents both from elementary schools and high schools. The group met for discussion a couple times and also discussed further online. In March 2010 the parents from elementary schools were excused from the committee due to the fact that the focus is on high schools, and it was understood that there would not be the same use of video screens for elementary students.

Comments noted in this report come from the discussions of the initial group that made up the Ward 10 committee, and comments coming from discussions at each high school council meetings, as well as individual comments given to committee members. The committee considered all comments from parents and guardians as valid and useful.

Parent understanding of goals of the video screens:

As the parent committee began our discussions, the only stated goal of the video screens was “increased student engagement.” The committee was looking for a more detailed explanation of the project, but was unable to attain one in the timeframe of putting this report together.

What the committee was able to ascertain was an explanation of what is meant by ‘student engagement.’ This definition was supplied to us by Superintendent Karen Falconer in consultation with school principals as: *Engaged students feel respected, valued and accepted for themselves. As a result, these students are actively learning; they are informed, feel a sense of ownership and connection between themselves and their school.*

Without more detailed goals, the parent committee discussed at length what we see as goals for having the video screens in the schools. Our discussions focused on the potential for learning. We would like to see the project have defined learning goals along with the stated goal of increased student engagement.

Upon discussion with Michael Girgis of One Stop Media, the committee was bolstered with the idea that the screens can be used for learning along with message display. **We suggest: a special presentation to students on the technology, advanced learning on the technology for interested students, a special presentation to teachers on the learning possibilities, and a general openness within the school to any potential learning tie-in.**

Major points of discussion:

1) What is liked by having the screens in the high schools:

A-We really like that modern technology is being used in the schools. We believe this technology is important to understand – not just technically, but how it can be used as well. With the technology modeled in the schools, students could discuss the best and worst uses of this kind of technology, and be given the opportunity to expand their thinking to something we don't even know yet. Waiting until post-secondary is too late to begin really understanding all this modern technology. Students use technology everyday as a normal part of their life, but do they really think about what they are doing? We would rather see technology embraced and taught wisely rather than spotty usage and even spottier teaching about it.

B-Central Commerce, for example, has noticed a marked interest level in learning more about the screens, which means that students are coming to school eager to learn and use the technology. This is one example of a result consistent with the stated project goal of “increased student engagement.”

C-Harbord had students asking to use the screens before they were even presented with the idea that they could contribute individual work. This is another example of the project goal being addressed.

D-We really like that students have the opportunity to add their work to the video streaming.

E-We like that positive messages can be streamed – such as health issues, peer pressure, etc.

2) What is expected to be the use of the screens:

A-We expect that the screens will be incorporated into the learning goals of the school and of almost every classroom.

B-We expect that the principal will be the final authority of what is streamed and those inputting information be very careful with what they are doing. We found out that this oversight is not necessarily happening consistently with the pilot project. There can indeed be very responsible students who can be trusted with putting on information, but we, as parents, feel better knowing that the principal takes a final authority position.

C-We expect that students will direct almost everything that goes on the screens. For some parents, this includes the news feed. Some parents do not feel that the news feed from One Stop is good or worthwhile news.

3) Concerns about the screens in the high schools:

A-The major concern discussed within our committee was advertising and sponsorships. This is a topic that has some parents saying absolutely no; and

other parents saying yes, with strict oversight. Michael Girgis of One Stop Media seemed very aware of all the concerns and he had already been approached by a number of advertisers that he simply said ‘no’ to. The committee understands that the TDSB has a policy in place for advertising and sponsorships, but it is highly recommended to address this issue separately.

Our committee did not spend a lot of time discussing details of revenue generation, however, some comments will be noted here.

First, sources of advertising such as milk board, egg association, and other nutritional topics are generally okay.

Second, if Much Music is considered, then other music sources should be considered as well such as JazzFM, classical music, or country music; basically whatever the students predominantly vote for, and the time for each category could be altered based on student voting. Having audio before school, after school, and/or during lunch seems to be okay.

Third, post-secondary institutes would be an acceptable advertiser.

Comments about future applications involving the screens:

To get the largest number of students viewing the video streaming, and to use this tool as a means to increase communication to parents and guardians, the next step is to make the streaming mobile. The streaming should be on the school website and available as an application for mobile devices. The committee views this as a very important part of the project as a whole.

Two concerns as raised with mobile streaming. First is the ability of students to capture part of the video and use it for their own purpose. After discussion with Michael Girgis of One Stop Media, it was learned that it is possible to imbed the video so that this is not possible.

Second is the safety feature of streaming the video only during school hours. This should perhaps continue and care taken to give application passwords only to those who qualify for one.

SUMMARY

*Overall, parents and guardians are pleased to see this new initiative in the high schools.

*Parents and guardians believe that this media does engage students and in a different way than voice announcements and flyers in the school, though it works with these other means of delivering messages, not replacing them.

*It is expected that students will drive most of what is posted on the screens, but that the Principal will have final say on all postings.

*It is expected that the video screens will have concrete learning goals associated with their use. This could be seen in an individual classroom or in the school as a whole.

*It is expected that further consultation will arrive at details for any advertising and/or sponsorships that will generate the revenue needed to keep the video screens going.