



PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide recommendations on the proper use of videoconferencing for school boards with a focus on privacy and security issues. School boards/authorities should develop a more complete policy or guideline on the use of videoconferencing within their school board/authority in order to make effective use of the technology.

Definition

A **videoconference** is a set of *interactive telecommunication* technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via simultaneous two-way video and audio transmissions.

Benefits of Using Videoconferencing

School boards/authorities benefit through the proper utilization of a videoconferencing system. Videoconferencing can be used by administrators and other staff to conduct meetings, professional development, and interviews. Videoconference technology also allows for sessions to be recorded for future use, which may include instructional or promotional activities; however, it is important that the requirements of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* be addressed prior to recording a videoconference.

Videoconferencing offers various possibilities for program delivery to students including virtual field trips, discussing lifestyle and culture with students in other countries, and sharing of educational resources. Videoconferencing reduces travel time, cost, and safety-related issues associated with travel.

Risks of Using Videoconferencing

Videoconference sessions open a window to the classroom or meeting room; therefore, staff must ensure that they know who is participating in the videoconference. Additionally, because videoconferencing technology allows for recording of conference sessions, it is important that controls are put in place to ensure that the conference is not recorded unless appropriate steps and measures have been put in place.

Personal Information

Personal information is defined in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and includes any information about an identifiable individual except for business title and contact. A simple image on a video system that is clear enough to identify a person or the activities in which they are engaged is classified as personal information and is protected under the Acts.

Appropriate steps need to be taken to ensure that personal information is protected whenever videoconferencing is used.



Confidential Information

Beyond the risk of exposing personal information there is also the risk of exposing confidential school board/authority information if the equipment is not used correctly or properly secured.

Inappropriate Content

It is possible for videoconferencing to be used for activities that are unsuitable for students. It is important that students are properly supervised and that connections are only made with trusted and approved sites to ensure activities are appropriate and to ensure student safety.

Inadvertent Release or Disclosure of Information

Sound and images that are broadcast could be captured as snapshots or videos from the system at the other location to which it is connected. If the broadcast is not encrypted, it could be intercepted. The video could then be posted to the Internet or otherwise used for purposes for which it was not intended.

General Guidelines

- Videoconferencing will not be used in any way to upload, post, reproduce, or distribute any information, software, or other material protected by copyright or any other intellectual property right without first obtaining the permission of such right holder.
- Videoconferencing systems will not be used for surveillance, either live or recorded.
- Staff using the videoconferencing system should be provided with training in advance so that they are familiar with the features and are aware of the security and privacy issues.
- Videoconferencing sessions shall not be recorded in any way or in any medium without the written permission of all individuals involved. Copyright and privacy legislation may be breached if images, video, or sound are recorded without permission or if recordings are used for purposes other than those agreed to, or in any other form or medium.
- Recorded information shall only be used for the purpose for which consent was provided.
- Video recordings are property of the school board/authority.
- Where videoconferencing is used to record a public meeting (e.g., a board meeting), meeting participants and the general public should be notified that the session is being recorded and informed of how it will be used. Notification shall include the intended use of the recorded images and the use of such records shall be limited to the purpose identified at time of recording.
 - Sample wording: “Please be advised that your image will be captured [optional: “and recorded”] during the proceeding videoconference. This information is collected under s. _____ of the Education Act for the purposes of providing educational programming [optional: “it may be used in the classroom for the purposes of assisting in instruction”]. Questions about the collection may be addressed to [title] at [business address] or [business telephone number].



- Videoconferencing should be conducted on the school board/authority-approved videoconferencing system. Videoconferencing should not be conducted using personal equipment over the public Internet as this is difficult to control and increases the security and privacy risks associated with videoconferencing.
- Videoconferencing systems need to be secure to prevent unauthorized users or hackers from gaining access to the system and transforming the videoconferencing system into video surveillance units by viewing, recording, or publicly broadcasting presumably private videoconferences.
- The camera should never be left on when set to “Auto-Answer.” If there is doubt as to the camera settings, the camera should be turned off when not in use.
- Ask the people at the other end of the videoconference who is in the room or listening to the videoconference. Sometimes the cameras do not have a wide enough view to show everyone in the room.
- Use the “Mute” feature when you are not speaking during a multi-point conference or when talking amongst yourselves before a conference starts.
- If possible, arrange for a phone to be nearby so that in the event of technical problems you can call and discuss the problem without leaving the room.
- Keep a videoconferencing session record or log to record when a session took place, who organized it, and who was involved.
- Know how to “stop” or “hang up” the call so that the videoconferencing session can be terminated if you are unhappy with the content.

Videoconferencing for Staff

- Staff will be notified prior to attending meetings or other events where videoconferencing is to be used. The notification should include information on who will be participating in or viewing the event.
- If the videoconference is to be recorded, staff must be made explicitly aware that the conference is being recorded and of the purposes for which the recording is to be used.

Video Conferencing Involving Students

- Schools must take responsibility for informing parents or guardians that videoconferencing with other schools or an external organization is being used by teachers with the students.
- It is recommended that schools collect written parental consent where the school where the videoconference is with external groups [**may require explicit consent depending upon when and why conferencing**].
- Where the videoconference is internal to the school board/authority, a notification letter to the parents may be sufficient unless the conference is being recorded [**notice should be sufficient even if recorded unless professional services**].
- Where videoconferences are arranged with external groups, it is important that the external group be approved by the school board/authority and school principal prior to the start of the conference.
- Prior to the start of the videoconference, external parties shall sign an agreement which sets out restrictions regarding access to the videoconference and the recording of the videoconference. Where conferences are recorded, the agreement shall clearly identify the purpose and use of the recording. Video recordings shall only



be used for the purpose identified in the consent form.

- All videoconferences should be approved in advance by the school principal. The school shall keep an annual log of sessions including date, time, and with whom the session is held.
- Schools must take responsibility for all students and any other individuals involved in video conferencing sessions.
- Students shall not be allowed to use videoconferencing equipment unsupervised by a teacher or learning assistant. The teacher should assume the normal role as class teacher and shall not assume that the presenter is able to see everything that is happening in the classroom. Any issues with behavior must be controlled by the class teacher, not the presenter.
- Students should not use headsets, as these may not allow adequate teacher assistance or supervision.
- Videoconference sessions with students shall not be recorded in any way or by any media, not consistent with the Act without the written permission of all individuals involved and the permission of a superintendent.

References

Cumbria and Lancashire Education Online - *Videoconferencing Acceptable Use Policy*