Dear Superintendent,

This brief memo is in response to your request to provide a risk assessment on the potential adoption of electronic monitoring in your schools. The guiding principles of the Belmont Report provide an ethical framework to engage the challenges that may arise if the District adopts this form of monitoring. The rest of this memo provides a brief outline of how this technology may raise concerns in regard to *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice.*

* **Respect for Persons**
* The Belmont report established two key ideas regarding the respect for persons topic, individuals should be treated as autonomous agents and person with diminishing autonomy are entitled to protection. As such, the main principle that we can draw from these two ideas is that individual should have a chance to provide voluntary consent to participle or not to participate in a procedure, practice, or process that affected them. Furthermore, anyone who are not capable of making these choices themselves should either be excluded or provide enough unbiased support for making these choices.
* Taking from this perspective while reviewing the 2018 New York Time’s article that you mentioned, a primary risk that monitoring brings is that historically, monitoring has violated the respect for persons framework. Essentially, none of the student or their parents portraited in the 2018 NYT article were made aware of the monitoring that was going on and so they never explicitly made a choice to be involve, hence they were involuntarily involved in the process. Another problem is that monitoring minors, students who have yet reach the age of 18, could be troublesome since it could affect their development and their future in society. Circling back to the Belmont report, to establish a respect for persons, transparency must be made clear and that groups of individuals that needed support should be taken into careful consideration.
* **Beneficence**
* With regarding to the topic of Beneficence, the Belmont report associate this principle with the Hippocratic maxim of “do no harm”. Essentially, the principle of beneficence follows two general rules, do not harm and maximize the possible benefits while minimizing the possible harms. The 2018 NYT article establish several examples where monitoring can help draws out potential suicidal messages. These examples are great in term of maximizing potential benefit for student and does advocate for the strong monitoring faction. However, there are equal number of examples where the student wrongfully gotten into trouble for harmless messages on social media. If we quickly dismiss the later story, like the example of Ausell Yousefi in the 2018 NYT example, we are indeed violating the principle of beneficence. Another great example shows up in the Supreme Court decision in 2021 NYT article, where the student mentioned had experience potential harm that could affect her development and future. Monitoring causes harm to these stories and therefore should be carefully considered.
* J**ustice**
* The principle of Justice portraited in the Belmont report focus on the sense of “fairness in distribution” or “what is deserve”. Furthermore, a person experience injustice when a particular benefit that they are entitled to is denied from them without any good reason. The question of justice has historically associated with individuals or group of individuals who are considered lacking power or are disadvantage. Some examples include minorities, people experiencing poverty, and even prisoners. If a monitoring algorithm is established, what is it to prevent the data collected from being bias toward these group of people. In fact, doing so is like saying we know you’re disadvantage, and we’ll be sure to emphasize that fact by taking away more of your entitled rights. This violates the principle of justice established in the Belmont report. To link the principle of justice with the case mentioned in the 2021 NYT report. The school monitoring system denied the student her rights to express herself on a platform that is not institutionalized by the school. This itself is unjust and therefore violates the principle of justice.

With that say, I believe that the school district should carefully reconsider whether implementing a monitoring system would violate the principles of respect for person, beneficence, and justice outlined in the Belmont report. In each principle, I invite you to assess it against some of the examples that was mentioned that are potential violation of these area when a monitoring system was applied to the school district in the past. Potentially, we might be using the wrong tool to help addressing the school violence issue. A potential solution that the school board could test is establish a platform to assist parents with their child problems, where they can raise concern and receive feedbacks from people in their community, or provide them with the information of what are acceptable behaviors in a specific institution like a school.

Best,

Ken Trinh