

# BETTER AT THE BOARDS

## EXAMINING CCTV SYSTEM INSTALLATIONS IN THREE ONTARIO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

• BY JACK KOHANE •

**“KIDS WILL BE KIDS”** was once a common response to incidents of bullying, theft and vandalism being reported in our schools. But in recent years, blazing headlines detailing the horrors of Taber, Alberta, and Columbine High School in the Littleton, Colorado, have been seared into the public’s consciousness.

While there is a lack of hard evidence on a national scale to support an actual increase in the prevalence and severity of youth antisocial behaviour, parents, police and educators are unanimous in their increasing sense of urgency to address the many aspects of this complex social issue.

It is known that in Toronto, Ontario, reported school violence has increased by 60 per cent over the last three years, and a recent survey by the British Columbia Ministry of Education found only 51 per cent of Grade 8 students actually felt safe at school.

Although not all school boards agree on the extent of the problem, or even see eye-to-eye on how best to combat it, more than ever before they are turning to technology as a key tool in their burgeoning security arsenal.

“We’ve been grappling with the issue of school violence for 10 years,” says Hugh Fraser, president of the Canadian Association of School Principals, and principal of Windsor Park Collegiate in Winnipeg, Manitoba. “In this province, we developed a code of conduct for schools in 1993. But over the past five years, more aggressive policies have been put in place, including the installation of CCTV.”

Fraser adds that it is difficult to

determine the impact of CCTV systems where they are included as part of a school’s total security pool, but he knows that security cameras are irreplaceable when it comes to identifying and apprehending perpetrators caught on recorded tape.

### DEALING WITH DUFFERIN-PEEL

Among the largest and fastest growing school boards in Ontario, the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board has approximately 88,000 students enrolled at 130 schools.

“Our school board first looked at the installation of CCTV systems at their schools in the late 1980s, to address the issue of student and staff safety, and the protection of assets,” says Minnaz Jivraj, the school board’s security and safety officer. “It was at this time that we agreed to have CCTV systems installed in high schools, provided the schools could raise the funds on their own. School administrators independently requested vendors to provide CCTV solutions that included the installation of black-and-white cameras, multiplexers and time-lapse VCRs for the amount of funding that was available.”

A number of products were investigated for the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board that could meet the needs of the schools within a reasonable price, resulting in the board upgrading the head end equipment at the schools from VCRs to digital recorders.

“As the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board continues to grow with the building of new schools and building additions to existing schools, new CCTV systems are added as part of the plan to new buildings; adding additional equipment to existing systems and in some cases upgrading the existing equipment,” explains Jivraj.

In the winter of 2001, the board determined more and newer generation equipment was required and issued a two-year tender requesting vendors to bid on the installation of CCTV equipment, service and maintenance. Toronto-based Vision Dynamics CCTV was ultimately awarded the contract.

Vision Dynamics has built its reputation on providing state-of-the-art integrated and automated CCTV security systems for numerous Ontario school boards. The systems chosen include Pelco’s DX 7000 DVR, noted for its high storage capacity, eight or 16 inputs for fixed or moveable cameras, continuous motion detection, alarm, pre-alarm and scheduled recording modes, back-up management, and high-speed playback; and the Intellex DV16000, a 700-plus hours real-time multiplexed system recording with a 400GB video database, which simul-



taneously displays live and playback video, hosts multiple remote users, and archives – all while recording multiple cameras.

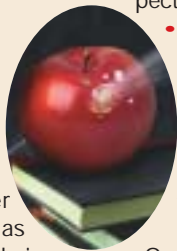
“These intelligent search tools save hours of time previously spent searching through VCR tapes, and give our clients’ staff more productive investigation time,” shares Grant Brewster, president of Vision Dynamics. “The Intellex system is very popular with school boards because it’s upgradeable, networkable, and easily integrates with other equipment.”

Jivraz notes that his board currently has 13 schools using Intellex units, while the remaining schools have either a VCR/multiplexer system or GYYR digital units. All digital units are net-

“It was really the systems in the private sector that spawned this amplified focus on CCTV in schools,” notes Jerry Stoangi, manager for York District School Board’s Plant Services. “We see CCTV everywhere – in banks, malls, air-

## RECENT WORLDWIDE SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

- **February 2, 1996**  
**Moses Lake, Washington**  
Two students and one teacher killed when 14-year-old Barry Loukaitis opened fire on his algebra class.
- **October 1, 1997**  
**Pearl, Mississippi**  
Two students killed and seven wounded by Luke Woodham, 16.
- **December 1, 1997**  
**West Paducah, Kentucky**  
Three students killed, five wounded by Michael Carneal, 14.
- **March 24, 1998**  
**Jonesboro, Arkansas**  
Four students and one teacher killed, 10 others wounded outside, as Westside Middle School emptied during a false fire alarm. Mitchell Johnson, 13, and Andrew Golden, 11, shot at their classmates and teachers from the woods.
- **May 21, 1998**  
**Springfield, Oregon**  
Two students killed, 22 others wounded, in the cafeteria at Thurston High School by 15-year-old Kip Kinkel.
- **April 20, 1999**  
**Littleton, Colorado**  
14 students (including killers) and one teacher killed, 23 others wounded, at Columbine High School in the nation’s deadliest school shooting. At the end of



their hour-long rampage, Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, turned their guns on themselves.

- **April 28, 1999**  
**Taber, Alberta**  
One student killed, one wounded, at W.R. Myers High School in first fatal high school shooting in Canada in 20 years. The suspect was a 14-year-old boy.
- **March 5, 2001**  
**Santee, California**  
Two people killed and 13 wounded by Charles Andrew Williams, 15, firing from a bathroom at Santana High School.
- **March 30, 2001**  
**Gary, Indiana**  
One student killed by Donald R. Burt, Jr., a 17-year-old student who had been expelled from Lew Wallace High School.
- **April 26, 2002**  
**Erfurt, Germany**  
13 teachers, two students, and one policeman killed, 10 wounded, by Robert Steinhäuser, 19, at the Johann Gutenberg secondary school. Steinhäuser then killed himself.
- **April 29, 2002**  
**Vlasenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina**  
One teacher killed, another wounded, by Dragoslav Petkovic, 17, who then killed himself.

worked at the school level, and Jivraj can centrally monitor each of the schools.

“I investigated a number of digital units out in the marketplace and, for the most part, they all offer the same thing with the same capabilities,” explains Jivraj. “However, the Intellex product met the Board’s IT department concerns on bandwidth and requested additional protection for their data security concerns. The main benefit for the administrators is the easy and simple operation of the system, with the ability to retrieve and review images quickly. I believe this system would be very helpful to any security operation that may be passive or active.”

## REVVED IN THE REGION

Ontario’s York Region District School Board piloted two of its 26 high schools with CCTV systems in 1997. Although the original systems were basic VCRs, now that digital options have become increasingly price-driven and more flexible in their capabilities, more of the board’s schools are being converted.

notes Stoangi. “We understand the technology of security systems, but we’re not always right on the pulse of the latest developments in this area. An outside source is invaluable in helping us put together these kinds of security decisions.”

Stoangi adds that in the York district’s case, a tender, not an RFP as such, went out to preferred suppliers. Vision Dynamics and its Pelco system were selected overall based on price and the company’s successful CCTV implementations in other boards. A Safe Schools budget, as well as a Ministry of Education initiative that includes funds for building renewals, are being used to purchase the equipment for all new schools (a total of 11 new elementary schools and one high school are planned for 2003), and in retrofits of existing plants.

Due to the immense size of the York District School Board, Stoangi emphasizes the key security challenge is keeping on top of all the rapid advances in security technology. “Because of the expense of installing and maintaining these sophisticated systems, we can’t look at this as a ‘flavour of the month’



ports – so why not in schools? It makes sense wherever there’s a large group of people in a big facility.”

Stoangi worked closely with Hoffman & Company, a security management consulting firm, headquartered in Toronto.

“Although our education administrators know where the problem schools are, and where the ‘hot spots’ are located in each building, we thought it best to listen to the input of security experts,”

scenario. The equipment we buy has to perform for the next decade at least."

### NEEDS IN NIAGARA

When Domenic Maniccia, manager of plant operations for the Niagara Catholic District School Board, sent out an RFP to security systems suppliers, he zeroed in on those offering valuable after-sales service, as well as top-of-



the-line digital recorders and CCTV systems. Again, Vision Dynamics was given the nod.

According to Maniccia, his main challenge is public access: "Since our buildings are open all day and well into the late evenings, we have limited lockdown periods," he notes. "We have assets to protect, and we have to ensure the safety of students and staff. It's always a delicate balancing act between public access, personal privacy and security."

Maniccia notes that CCTV has been well accepted by all education stakeholders. And the feedback he is receiving from principals is that they believe that both internal and external vandalism has been curtailed since the introduction of security cameras.

"They're noticing decreases in antisocial behaviour, a drop in afterhours vandalism,

**"IT'S ALWAYS A DELICATE  
BALANCING ACT BETWEEN  
PUBLIC ACCESS, PERSONAL  
PRIVACY AND SECURITY"**

**– Dominic Maniccia**

and less theft and other incidents in locker rooms," he says.

None of the school boards questioned for this report could provide quantitative statistics on the impact of CCTV systems since their installation. But all agree that trends will be tracked and adjustments in camera locations, image and colour quality, as well as equipment upgrades, will be done as future needs dictate.

"As with most other businesses, the basis for success is location, location, location," says Maniccia. "In our situation, that means where to place our security cameras. But we have to find solutions fast, because cost savings stemming from reduced vandalism, theft and on-site crime can be more constructively spent on text books and teaching aids." 🍁

*Jack Kohane is a freelance writer based in Toronto, Ontario.*

**Security has a new look.**

Let us show you  
what we  
see.

- Network Based Solutions
- Systems Integration
- Intrusion Detection
- Access Control
- Video Over IP
- Digital Video
- Automation
- Biometrics

 **Vision Dynamics**  
Integrated Digital Security Solutions

[www.visiondynamicscctv.com](http://www.visiondynamicscctv.com) 1.800.375.9354

Compliments  
of  
Vision Dynamics  
and  
*Canadian Security Magazine*

