



AS SCHOOLS PREPARE TO REOPEN, VISUAL COMMUNICATION WILL BE CRITICAL

A NEW GENRE OF HEALTH PROTOCOL DISPLAY SOLUTIONS CAN HELP NAVIGATE THIS NEW NORMAL AND OFFER FUTURE FUNCTIONALITY.

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As colleges and K-12 schools plan for classes this fall — online, in classrooms, or a hybrid of both — those that opt for some form of in-person instruction will need to deliver it safely, ever-mindful of the Coronavirus that's still present. In order to open their doors and welcome students and faculty, educational institutions will need to follow health guidelines and be able to communicate information effectively, whether it's to observe social distancing practices, monitor and report the number of people occupying a room, or publish staggered class schedules to minimize potential exposures. Digital display technology can play an important role.

During the best of times, display technology — in the form of digital signage, video display kiosks and interactive wayfinding systems — is critical to informing and engaging people as they navigate public and private spaces. It can take on new importance now as schools across the country prepare to operate safely during the pandemic.

Visual communication is persistent and self-reinforcing. Especially in K-12 schools, continual visual messaging, supported by creative, compelling digital content plays an important role in promoting healthy habits that will serve schools well even when the current pandemic subsides. And at a time when circumstances evolve quickly and up-to-date information is critical, digital signage, which can be changed at a moment's notice, gives school administrators the tools they need to keep students and staff informed.

Technology providers have started to develop a new category of turnkey digital health safety protocol solutions that combine video displays with software, sensors and more. But they are not necessarily one-trick ponies. At their core, these solutions

include the kind of digital signage technology that supports visual communication in retail, hospitality, corporate and — increasingly — education applications. So, after helping schools confront the challenges posed by the pandemic, these health safety protocol solutions can be redeployed for other ongoing communication initiatives, from mass security notifications to information about school events.

The new class of health protocol display solutions available to higher education and K-12 school districts range from wellness kiosks to reconfigurable solutions to occupancy management systems and more.

WELLNESS KIOSKS

For staff, students and parents entering a school, campus building or other educational facilities, many institutions will choose to screen individuals for possible infection. New all-in-one wellness kiosks are easy to setup at key entry points and don't require staff to constantly monitor their operation. They include a vertically-oriented smart display with a built-in operating system for processing and presenting information, as well as an integrated thermal scanner for quickly and accurately taking people's temperature.

Multipurpose wellness kiosks not only take temperature readings, they can show health safety video content or important messages about the school's protocols and plans. And many include built-in features such as motion-activated hand sanitizer dispensers and containers for offering masks or gloves. More advanced kiosks can automatically track hand sanitizer usage, so schools know not only that visitors are taking the important step of protecting themselves and others, but also when it's time to refill the dispenser.



RECONFIGURABLE HEALTH PROTOCOL SIGNAGE SOLUTIONS

Many educational institutions already have digital signage displays mounted throughout their facilities for school messages, sports highlights, event schedules, cafeteria menus and more. Clearly, existing signage can be repurposed to communicate important health information as schools reopen. But more visual communication may be needed, especially in locations not currently served by existing digital signage.

Mobile, reconfigurable health protocol signage solutions allow schools to position their messages in high-traffic locations and then move them as necessary. Once again, vertically aligned smart

displays form the basis of the solution, attached to a portable A-frame mount or a rolling base.

A built-in operating system and digital signage software allow staff to tailor messages from day-to-day and place digital signs at drop-off and pick-up points in lobbies and learning spaces that don't currently include digital signage. Various portable health protocol signage solutions, like some from LG, even come with batteries and high-brightness displays so they can be placed curbside, for example, where people can read them in daylight and the school doesn't have to run power cords to them.

OCCUPANCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Many schools' health protocols will include limiting the number of people in a building, lecture hall or other large space, similar to how retail stores and restaurants count and limit patrons to allow for social distancing. Occupancy management solutions for education can help automate an important health protocol while also providing digital signage messaging.

Using sensors integrated with a smart digital display and a media player, schools can track and count students and faculty as they enter and exit a space. So there's no need for staff to risk their own health manually counting people. The system can display current occupancy levels versus school-determined maximums and alert people about what they should

do next. Such systems can usually be attached to a school's IT network so that staff automatically receive alerts when spaces are at full occupancy and arrangements should be made to accommodate waiting visitors.

Such occupancy management systems can also be used on campus for very specific purposes. Increasingly, transportation hubs, corporate sites and other facilities are using smart restroom solutions to monitor restroom occupancy and alert custodial services when they may need to be cleaned. The same solutions, which include a small display that tells people when it's safe to enter, can be used in schools and college buildings.

SAFE INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS

Advanced technology has even made it so that interactive solutions, such as touch-enabled wayfinding displays, can be deployed safely by schools, whether for existing applications or to convey health safety-specific information, like the safest, one-way route to a room or location in a building.

As schools navigate safe reopening during the pandemic, interactive touch technology can actually be “contact-less.” The touch functionality will still be there in the future, but for now interactivity can be accomplished by QR code scanners or voice control integrated with new and existing systems. For example, a campus visitor wants to find the student center but doesn’t want to touch an interactive display. By scanning a QR code with her smartphone, an interactive map is replicated on her device and she can safely navigate routes and other information on

her smartphone screen. Or she can speak to the interactive display and using artificial intelligence and voice recognition, the display can show her information the way today’s smart speakers do.

Ultimately, many of the features and functions of health protocol display solutions will have a useful life well beyond the current public health challenge. Schools that already have robust digital signage programs can easily see the value of added visual communication in reopening during the pandemic. And those just starting out can quickly adopt new health protocol solutions today and use them as the foundation of future digital signage applications. Technology companies have been recommitting their expertise to helping educational institutions operate safely. As they say, we’re all in this together.



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