

New touchscreens take over AHS

Albert High School (AHS)'s Athletic Department purchased a digital touchscreen that displays sporting events. Then under the direction of Ms. Kathrine Smith, this screen—funded entirely by the Athletic Department's budget—was put onto the wall located at the side entrance in January 2024. The building added a second screen in June 2024 that took the place of the former art display case in the Commons.

These screens display various records, teams, candid photos, events, artwork, and casts of shows. The touchscreen at the side entrance promotes the Athletic Department, while the Commons one features the Art and Music Department, along with promoting current news.

"The second screen was added to highlight more school groups and to also be a rotating sign of school announcements," said Mr. Bob Richards, former District Media Resource Center (DMRC) Coordinator. "The high school has so many great programs [and] events, and [since we have] students who are not athletes, we wanted to make sure that everyone could be highlighted."

The screens also have archival potential. "It allows us to maximize the physical space to showcase all the great things that are currently happening or to capture those traditions, memories, and history from the past," said former Athletic Director Ms. Smith.

"People will be able to walk in for the musical this year, and say, 'Hey, look! I was in the musical in 1978, here's a picture of our group,'" said Mr. Robert White, Townsville School District's Director of Public Information.

As of now, many subsections of the Commons board are empty; however, students can look forward to future changes and additions. "Right now, where we are is just a framework," said Ms. Smith. "The most exciting thing about this project is how much potential it has to expand and capture more and more things."

Students and staff alike have mixed reactions. Senior athlete Cathy Greene wishes the Athletic Department spent the money elsewhere. "The cross country team's hurdles that we use every day at the field house are falling apart," Greene said. "Some of them we can't even put up. We don't have the greatest system for at home track meets for announcing things—we have a megaphone, but people don't always hear that."

The loss of the display case in the Commons means that the Art Department now only has two secure areas to display art at AHS, both of which are located in the Art Wing. "One is by Photo, and one is by [my classroom]," said AHS art teacher Ms. Rebecca Johnson. "The bulletin board [by Ms. Brown's room] is risky because kids can come by and grab things since there's no glass over it. We can put stuff there, but it's not safe."

Greene recalls the first time she saw the Commons screen. "I came over the summer to do Helping Crew, and I saw [the touchscreen], and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, the display case is gone.' The [screen] displays pictures of the art, but I don't think it's the same thing," said Greene.

Ms. Johnson agrees. "It's a lie that we believe when it's on the screen; it's a translation of a translation instead of the physicality," she said. "Art needs to be seen in person. Our students like to have their work shown in real time. Sculptures [for example] can't be seen the same way in a photograph—it flattens it, immediately."

Despite this, the touchscreens provide a more accessible way to record awards, artwork, events, and shows. "The best part about having that board is being able to continue to create an environment that's welcoming and affirming for our students—that they can continue, through multiple different ways,

to create that sense of belonging to our larger school body. That's our hope and our passion behind all the things we do, whether it be in athletics or any of the other departments," said Ms. Smith.

"For the generations of all the people that come through, there's a legacy to be built. We as teachers need to be cognizant of being sure that all kids' voices are up there. We're working on systems still, and we're working on ways to make that more efficient and reflective for the future," said Ms. Johnson.

If students are uncomfortable with photos of them on the touchscreens, they are advised to reach out to the DMRC Coordinator. Until that position is filled, however, students should contact Mr. White at robertwhite@email.com.