

HARLAN RICHARDS

July 25, 2019

Ways to Improve the Tablets and Kiosk

This is a copy of a letter I sent to Makda Fessahaye, administrator of the Division of Adult Institutions in the Wis. Department of Corrections, about the tablets and kiosk - things I think should be addressed.

I wrote to the Kiosk Governance Board on May 2nd and did not receive a response. Although it is unfortunate that the price of emails is going up to 10¢, that is not what needs to be addressed by you. Have you compared the cost of songs (\$1.95) with what prisoners in other systems pay? I'm sure we're paying a higher price (Florida prisoners were paying \$1.70 per song before they changed vendors to get lower prices).

The real issue is what we are provided with on our tablets. You describe tablets as "a mechanism [to] provide positive cognitive, emotional, spiritual, social, and health benefits." While the current offerings do provide some benefits, so much more can be done so easily. Let's start with some basics.

Why isn't "staff messaging" available on the tablets? And why can't we send messages to DOC officials in Madison (like you, for instance)? Are you afraid there would be too many prisoners using the system? Are you afraid of too much feedback?

When are you going to activate the "photo app" on the tablets so our families can send us low-cost photos? In my opinion, that's much more important than offering us movies for \$3.00 each that the majority of prisoners can't afford to rent. Can't you get access to the data on how many movies are purchased and how many prisoners are purchasing them? I'm sure you'll find that the majority of movies are being purchased by a handful of wealthy prisoners while the rest of us watch television.

When are we going to be allowed to purchase ebooks? Having 15,000 pre-20th Century books can only go so far. We need current books, including dictionaries, almanacs and educational books. The Rachel system in the library offers copyright-free textbooks from saylor.org; learnfree.org; and cnx.org as well as the reentry system called "Fair Shake." All of that could be available on our tablets for free. Our library time is so limited no prisoner has the time to use those resources in the library.

We have unlimited hours in our cells with nothing productive to do with all that time. We could be educating ourselves instead of playing solitaire or watching movies.

Finally, why isn't there an open source word processing program on the tablets? We have 30 gigabytes of memory and nothing to store. We could be using that memory space to write books, poems, stories, etc. and saving it. Instead, we are still using typewriters and piling up stacks of paper in our cells.

I suggest you contact the Michigan DOC to get a lesson on what's possible with a tablet. They have word processing and are considering an open source spreadsheet program. They also have a working photo app and allow prisoners to print photos and documents from their tablets.

Instead of patting yourself on the back for giving us a new toy to play with, step up and turn that toy into a tool for education, self-improvement, rehabilitation and reentry preparation. Stop wasting the power and potential of our tablets to become a life-changing force for good.