

Six Ways to Make K-12 Schools More Secure



**Best practices to help keep
students, faculty and staff safer**





Strategy 1:

Conduct
an Assessment
and Build a Plan



Strategy 2:

Drive All Access
to a Central
Entry Point



Strategy 3:

Know Who Is
in Your Building(s)



Strategy 4:

Develop Formal
and Informal
Surveillance



Strategy 5:

Limit
Visitor Access



Strategy 6:

Use Student
Badges for
More than ID

Proven strategies to make your school safer and more secure

While schools remain one of the safest places for children to be, recent events and media coverage are leading parents, students and the community to believe otherwise. Perception can be more powerful than reality, to the detriment of student attendance, academic performance and staff morale. The best way to address these fears is with preparedness and an open dialogue that includes a variety of stakeholders.

Ensuring the safety and security of your campus isn't the role of a single person, nor can it be achieved with a single method of control. Creating a safer environment

requires a comprehensive prevention and response strategy that actively involves students, parents, faculty and community agencies.

Here are six key ways you can evaluate and augment your current security protocols to help your school more safely carry out its academic mission.



Jonathan Gonzales
Principal
Washington Senior High School



Strategy 1: Conduct an Assessment and Build a Plan

Developing an emergency operations plan (EOP) that considers a variety of potential dangers to your school environment is the first step in protecting your students.

The first step in creating a safer, more secure campus is conducting a rigorous assessment to determine current threats and vulnerabilities. While pre-planned, armed attacks are often top-of-mind, you should also consider threats such as natural disasters, man-made disasters, infectious diseases and illnesses, and abductions.

Once you identify the factors that could have the greatest impact on your facility, you should develop an emergency operations plan (EOP) to address them. Then, you'll be in a better position to prioritize your efforts and resources.



Step 1

Assemble the assessment team

Your team should include local law enforcement and first responders, plus representatives of all stakeholders in the school, such as the school board, administration, faculty and staff, students, parents and community members. Many schools also hire a consultant to guide them through the assessment process.

Step 2

Conduct the assessment

Begin with a walkthrough while school is in session to better evaluate day-to-day security operations in action. It's best to start in an adjacent neighborhood and follow the path students and visitors take, up to the front door and on to the classroom.

Observe with a critical eye: look for things such as places a person could hide; whether or not vehicles are visible from the front door or front office; if there are structural or natural elements a person could use to climb up onto the roof; and if your security, lighting and/or camera equipment is operative.

Step 3

Uncover threats and vulnerabilities

Assessments should document two primary things: threats and vulnerabilities. Threats are external events that put people and property at risk, while vulnerabilities are gaps in your facilities, policies and procedures through which threats could potentially pass. Your assessment team needs to prioritize which threats and vulnerabilities represent the greatest risk so you can design a plan for mitigation.

Step 4

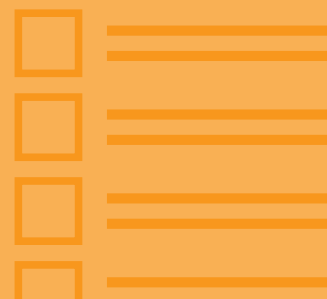
Build an emergency operations plan (EOP)

An EOP outlines how you intend to mitigate the threats and vulnerabilities you identified in the previous steps. It should:

- List your community partners, such as law enforcement, first responders, mental health providers, hospitals and more
- Specify the roles and responsibilities of those partners, as well as your own faculty and staff
- Identify any training needs, both internal and external

Need an assessment tool?

The American Clearinghouse on Educational Facilities (ACEF) offers the [**Educational Facilities Vulnerability/Hazard Assessment Checklist**](#) for over 700 items in 53 categories.





Thomas McCresson
Assistant Principal
Elementary Entrance Monitor
6:45am - 7:45am



Strategy 2: Drive All Access to a Central Entry Point

Limiting and monitoring entrances reduces opportunities for criminal activity while limiting the cost to secure your school.

The easiest and most important action a school can take to become safer and more secure is to drive all visitor and unbadged traffic, including students and faculty, to a centrally located, easily monitored entry point. The entry point should be manned by security or other front-office personnel and equipped by one or more security cameras. Visitors should also be required to exit the same way they entered and check out before they leave the building.



Staff the entry point with security or front-office personnel

Visitors, meaning anyone without a badge, should be identified, verified and badged before entering the building. Best practices recommend requiring a government-issued ID that can be presented to a card reader system. The system will automatically identify the visitor, check him or her against internal and external watch lists for suspicious activity, and, once cleared, print a temporary visitor badge.

When possible, create a physical barrier

Many schools use a security vestibule or double entry system that allows staff members to screen guests before granting them access to the building. Some schools are going further, building restrooms and small conference rooms outside the “firewall” to accommodate visitor needs without subverting security protocols.

Lock down all other potential entry and exit points

Use locks or other hardware to prevent access to the building from the roof, windows and vents. Make sure no structures or building features could allow climbing access to adjoining windows and roofs. And fit all exterior entries with hardware that facilitates a full perimeter lockdown in an emergency.

Remember to keep a watchful eye. Faculty and staff should be trained to not allow an unknown person follow them into the school without being formally checked in.



PARENT

Alicia Johnson

Arrived 1:40pm

Delivering class project
to daughter, Lexi Johnson

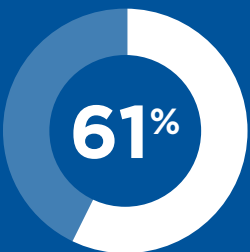
Classroom 207a



Strategy 3: Know Who Is in Your Building(s)

Identifying and badging visitors to your school can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. As a result, many schools are choosing an automated visitor management system that completes the verification and badge-printing process in as little as 20 to 30 seconds. Schools

can then manage who enters the building, when and for what purpose, while reducing the staff time and energy to do so. And parents can then be assured that administrators know who has access to their child's school.



According to Campus Safety magazine, **61% of K-12 schools in the U.S.** have recently implemented or upgraded an automated visitor management system.



Manual visitor management is vulnerable to risks

Paper visitor logs, while simple and seemingly efficient, present a number of security concerns:

- Visitor credentials can easily be falsified
- Visitors can plainly see who has preceded him or her into the building
- It's time-prohibitive to check visitor names against watch lists
- In an emergency, it's difficult to see who's in the building and where they are

An effective, automated system streamlines the visitor management process while improving safety and security for students and staff.

Automated visitor management systems help ensure a more secure building

With an automated system, visitors present a government-issued ID such as a driver's license, which can be scanned, captured in a database and screened against internal and external watch lists. Recommend external watch lists include the national sex offender registry and state mandated felony background checks. The system then provides a high-quality, customizable badge with the visitor's photo – in as little as 30 seconds.

In addition to expediting and enhancing the visitor management process, an automated system can help you:

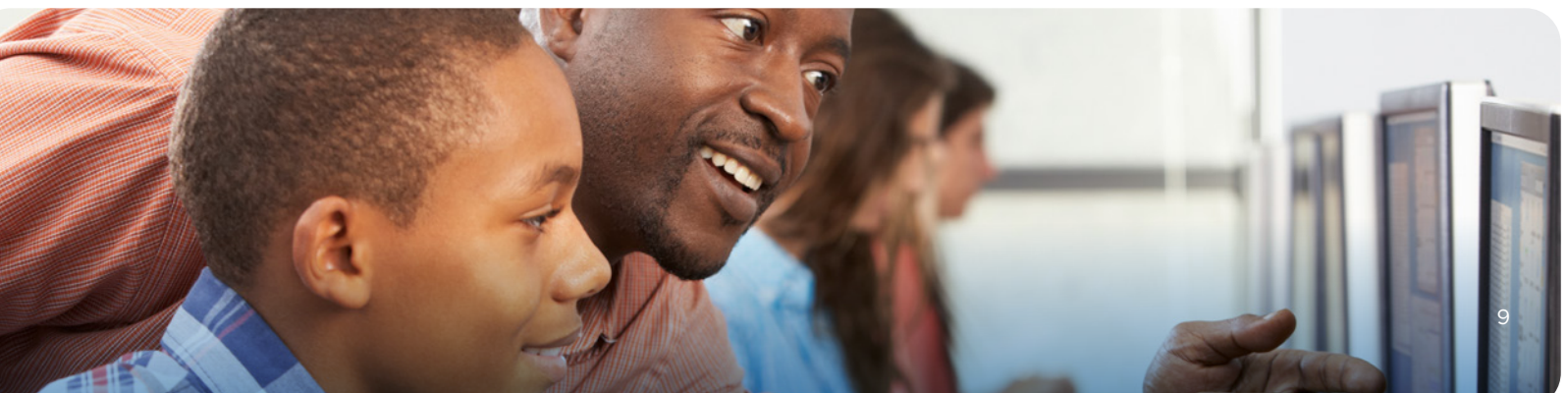
Alert the guard about visitors before they arrive – with a web-based interface, faculty can pre-register guests in advance so the guard at the front door knows who will be arriving that day and when.

Act quickly in an emergency – quickly determine precisely who is in the building and where, and forward that information to law enforcement and other first responders with the click of a mouse.

Streamline future visits – the system can use information captured in the database to recognize a previously verified visitor.

Facilitate review of patterns – administrators can quickly access visitor reports to identify patterns and opportunities to improve visitor management protocols.

Enhance your school's professionalism – internal watch lists can be used to identify VIPs or school board members, helping front desk personnel better assist them when they arrive.





TEACHER

Melanie Andresen

7th Grade English

Hall Monitor 12pm - 1:15pm



Strategy 4: Develop Formal and Informal Surveillance

Together, formal and informal surveillance can provide a powerful deterrent and thwart potential threats **before a crisis occurs.**

One of the core tenets of crime prevention through environmental design, or CPTED, is surveillance – both formal and informal.



Formal surveillance refers to video cameras and other electronic equipment used to monitor entrances, parking areas, hallways, playgrounds and more for suspicious activity.



Informal surveillance refers to “eyes on the street,” or the watchfulness of faculty, staff and students who are highly attuned to the flow of people and activities in their areas of the building.



How to develop effective formal surveillance

Use Appropriate Equipment

Security equipment experts recommend point-tilt-zoom (PTZ) cameras because they can cover more space, meaning you may be able to use fewer cameras. The cameras should be positioned to show visitors' faces and offer good sight lines down hallways and into stairwells.

Monitor the Entry Vestibule

Even with a staff member present, video surveillance helps monitor and prevent the practice of "piggybacking," in which an unauthorized, unscreened visitor gains access to the building behind a student or faculty member.

Don't Forget About the Hard-to-See Areas

Parking areas, bus drop-offs and other exterior areas may be difficult or impossible for staff to monitor from the front office or main entry. But awareness and monitoring of these areas may provide an early warning that something is amiss.

How to encourage informal surveillance

Video cameras are only part of the solution. Informal surveillance, which relies on the attentiveness of faculty, students and staff, often provides the first indication something or someone is out of place. It begins with a simple, intuitive awareness of who and what belongs in the building, and who and what does not. To enhance the effectiveness of informal surveillance, faculty and staff should receive regular, ongoing training regarding school policies, procedures and action plans.

In a recent survey of architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) professionals in the U.S. by Building Design + Construction magazine, **69% said they have specified or installed video surveillance systems for schools in the past 18 to 24 months.**

A woman with dark hair, wearing a purple cardigan over a striped shirt, is sitting on a small orange stool and reading a book to a group of children. The children are sitting on the floor, looking up at her. In the background, there is a chalkboard and a blue bulletin board with several small cards pinned to it, each containing a math problem like '5 + 3' or '7 + 4'.

VISITOR

Amelia Fredrickson
McDermot Public Library

Reading Adventure Day
Library

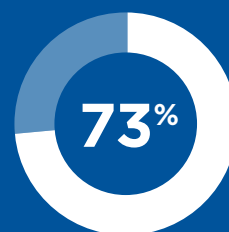
Restricted access

Strategy 5: Limit Visitor Access

Another key principle of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is territoriality. Schools, like any facility, can be divided into securable zones. Students, faculty, staff and visitors can be given smart access cards that allow entry only to the appropriate areas. Going a step further and color-coding the visitor cards will alert faculty and students whether or not the visitor is supposed to be in a secured zone and if they need to notify security.

Granting or denying access based on information coded on a badge or access card supports another CPTED principle: hardening the target. Perpetrators, when faced with a series of locked doors, often abandon their plans and simply move on in search of an easier target.

According to Campus Safety magazine, **73% of K-12 schools** in the U.S. have supplemented their access control system with locks and other door hardware.





Create clear definitions of space using territoriality principles

School facilities are also used for a wide variety of community functions. To limit public access and improve security, many schools have divided interiors separating classroom wings from community wings, so visitors can easily enter the community space without gaining access to classrooms. Within the classroom wing, some visitors might receive access to hallways in order to make mechanical repairs, for example, but be denied access to the classrooms themselves.

In a *Campus Safety* magazine survey, 29% of schools in the U.S. reported that policies supporting the use of access control systems “either don’t exist or need to be upgraded.” Forty percent add that students, staff, administrators and teachers “are not trained on our access control policies or don’t follow them.”

Training your staff is just as important as upgrading your access control system or implementing territoriality principles. While things like electronic access control, smart badges and access cards, and door hardware are critical to keeping a campus secure, staff training and adherence to policies remains equally critical. Situational awareness, or simply being aware of what’s going on around you, also goes a long way. The sooner you’re aware of potential danger, the better.



One teacher or student propping open a door can negate a million-dollar security system and months of careful planning.





Strategy 6: Use Student Badges for More than ID

In addition to identifying and tracking your students, ID badges can perform other functions that help streamline student management operations. Rolling visual identification, door access and foodservice capabilities into a single badge makes it easier for students and administrators to track and manage important daily functions such as:

- Transportation
- Time and attendance
- School lunches
- Transactions at computer labs, bookstores and libraries

In a school with hundreds or thousands of students, eliminating manual tasks in favor of a digital student management system with multipurpose ID badges saves valuable staff time and resources. It also enhances students' safety and security.

Use student ID badges to track attendance, transactions and more.



ID card + access card + food service card in one badge benefits students and staff



Transportation

Staff can easily track student whereabouts as they enter and exit school transportation. Student cards can also be programmed to alert bus drivers when individual students are scheduled to disembark.



Time and Attendance

Identifying and recording tardy students used to be a pen-and-paper task. With badges that have the student ID stored in a barcode, magnetic stripe, or a contactless card the student can swipe their card when they arrive, and the system will automatically record arrival time. The same process can be used for dismissal.



School Lunches

Parents can load the card with money at the start of the school year, meaning students don't need to carry cash or worry about theft. Students who receive free or reduced priced lunches swipe their card like everyone else. No one but the system knows how much money each person has or doesn't have in their account, preserving student privacy.



Transactions at Computer Labs, Bookstores and Libraries

Students can use their badges to “pay” for things such as computer usage, school merchandise and library books, allowing administrators to quickly and easily monitor usage.

With multipurpose ID badges, parents, faculty and staff feel reassured their school takes security and student privacy seriously.

Partner with a leader in secure identity and access control solutions



At HID Global, we're a leading global provider of secure identity and access control solutions, including smart cards, card readers and ID badge printers. And we're proud to partner with schools to pioneer best practices in student safety and security with solutions that include student identification and visitor management.

Making your school safer and more secure requires a multidisciplinary approach that combines technology, hardware and an ongoing commitment to student, staff and community training. While no one piece of the puzzle can meet all of your security needs, even a small gap in protocol can put your security program at risk. We can help you evaluate your current strategy and design a solution to promote its strengths and mitigate its weaknesses.

In the mean time, executing any of the six strategies presented here can help have a significant, positive impact on the safety of people and property in your facility.

For more information about HID Global's solutions for K-12 schools, visit hidglobal.com/education/k-12.

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