Access Control
Protecting an Entire School System

The York County School Division (YCSD) in Virginia has never had a major security problem, and that's the way they want to keep it. To ensure the security of their facility and safety of their students, they installed security systems in each of their 23 facilities.

The equipment included several different brands, and while each system did a good job of protecting its building, monitoring and maintaining the various systems created some confusion and generated extra work.

Building Protection

In early 2000, York County schools turned to ASI Security in Newport News Virginia to better integrate their protection systems. "We replaced all of the various intrusion panels with the DMP XR200, and that made life a lot easier for the division," according to Bobby Schaffer, general manager of ASI.

Several years later, ASI provided the next phase of the system. It was upgraded when YCSD integrated their fire protection systems with their intrusion systems. As part of the fire system integration, the upgrade included installing the DMP XR500N panel. This network-ready panel enabled YCSD to make the transition from dial-up to Ethernet communications.

The installation of the XR500N with network communications laid the groundwork for the final component of their integrated system, access control.

Securing Building Access

"In the past all of the exterior doors of our schools had to be manually locked," explains Mark Tschirhart, supervisor of resources and security control at YCSD. "We had no knowledge of whether the doors were actually locked or even closed without walking the entire building. We also found that when teachers would go outside for Phys Ed class or other activities, they would prop doors open, or would have to knock on a window so they could get back in the building."

Schaffer says that after the installation of the XR500N panels, York had the foundation for access control already in place. Enabling the access control capability would be fast and affordable.

Schaffer says "They didn't have to purchase any new control panels, software, or computers. They just added controllers, door contacts, electric strikes, and readers at each protected door. It was easy to install!"

The system ASI installed includes 23 buildings and a total of 220 controlled doors. All exterior doors are monitored through the system. The school division replaced their existing employee identification badges with new proximity badges. Although they look identical to the previous badges, teachers and staff can now unlock doors and arm or disarm the security system with their badge.

Video intercoms were installed at the main entrances of all schools and other high-traffic building entrances. Students or visitors without an access badge use the video intercom to call the front office, identify themselves, and ask to be admitted. The person monitoring the intercom can then remotely unlock the door.

Feeling More Secure

York County school administrators are confident that they have schools that are safe and secure. "Having just one door unsecure is unacceptable, "Tschirhart says. "We can monitor the status of all exterior doors and know that the teachers and students are safe and secure."

Tschirhart was also glad to reduce the number of keys. "We had been issuing keys for years, but there was no practical way to track all of them. Some teachers did not have keys for the exterior doors of their school, but now through the use of the access badges they can open virtually any exterior door. The result is that there is no longer a need to prop open doors or to bang on windows to get back in the school."

Pushing the System to Do More

ASI Security monitors the school systems fire and security systems remotely, but the school division manages their own security database and programs changes to user profiles. Tschirhart describes YCSD as an "intense user," and says that they "… required a high level of flexibility in the system. We have over 2,000 users with very granular access requirements. The programming flexibility gave us the ability to create profiles for each building and manage the different hours that our users require."

"Our goal when we started was just to maintain security," Tschirhart says. "We were surprised at how far we've been able to push the system to give the teachers and staff better access and convenience."

Bruton High School

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> Mark Tschirhart, Supervisor of Resources and Security Control, York County School Division

Surprised by the Acceptance

The York administrators were braced for some backlash when the access control system went live. They expected some grumbling from not only parents but teachers as well. "We thought parents would complain about having to go to the front door to be buzzed in when they visited a school", Tschirhart says. "We had very few complaints and some parents actually had asked why we hadn't done it sooner."

Ironically, as the school system began to install the card access system which provided increased control over users, they actually made the building more accessible to teachers. Equipped with their proximity badges, they are able to move more freely around their facilities than ever. Teachers like the increased access the new system provides for them.

Queens Lake Middle School

Grafton Middle and High School

Equipment List
- XR500N Command Processor™ Panel
- 734 Wiegand Interface Module
- Door hardware (strikes, contacts, and readers)

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