Hilton Central School District

Industry
Education

Location
New York, United States

Products
Security Center, Omnicast™, Synergis™

Partners
Frontrunner Network Systems, Axis, HID Global

New York school district completes a 3-year phased upgrade to Genetec™ Security Center with video surveillance and access control to better protect students and respond to events.

The Hilton Central School District is a PreK-12 public school system in New York State in Monroe County northwest of Rochester, New York. With a transportation terminal for buses and five educational facilities, including three elementary schools, a middle school and a high school, Hilton Central School District does not take security lightly. So when their 10-year old analog cameras, DVRs, and disparate access control system were no longer able to help them provide adequate recordings to resolve events, catch vandals and protect their over 4500 students district-wide, they turned to the latest IP security technology for the job.

Business challenge

"Our old system was failing miserably," said Josh Ennis, Network Administrator at Hilton Central School District. "We could live view a few cameras, but they only had about three hours of archive retention, no one knew how to retrieve the video, and coverage was scarce. So the likelihood of a camera actually capturing an event was slim."

Their access control was not any better; cards were not being issued or used, so they relied on simple locks and keys to control physical access. With the help of Frontrunner Network Systems, a local Genetec Certified Elite integrator with over 30 years of experience serving the K-12 market, Hilton

Central School District started a phased security upgrade to Genetec's unified security platform. Hilton Central relied on Frontrunner for their knowledge, and in-depth understanding of the needs of school districts.

"We had been using Genetec Security Center on a very limited scale just for the technology environment to watch server closets, so it served as a trial phase before our initial district-wide rollout," said Ennis. "We had a very positive experience with Genetec and Security Center, and we knew that this solution would easily accommodate expansion, where we could grow without having to rip and replace every time we wanted to upgrade."

Making the long-term switch to Unified Security

Hilton Central began with video surveillance, re-using functional analog cameras with the help of encoders and accessing additional funds through a New York state aid program to complete their initial rollout of over 200 cameras. By the next year, they added another 250 cameras, swapped out old equipment for IP cameras, and began the access control installation with just over 10 doors.

"In a lot of cases, schools start with a few dozen cameras and then grow to hundreds, so the ease of management and the ability to grow slowly over time is what makes Security Center ideal for K-12 districts," said Sean Patton, Sales Engineer at Frontrunner Network Systems.

Today, Security Center's video surveillance system, Omnicast™, manages over 500 Axis Communications IP cameras (AXIS P3304, AXIS P3367 and AXIS M3014 fixed domes and AXIS P5534-E PTZ dome) and almost 50 Arecont panoramic IP cameras (AV8360), and its access control system, Synergis, controls just over 35 doors equipped with HID Global's EDGE 400 readers. According to Ennis, "We have had success with the AXIS M3014 model lately. They are very discreet, cost-effective and easy to install." Hilton Central has 6 servers, each equipped with failover, providing extra redundancy in case of hardware failure. These servers provide about 40TB of storage but plans are in place to add another 30TB, bringing their retention of archived video to an ideal 30 days.

Saving time with powerful day-to-day features

"It's all the customizable features in Security Center that make a big difference," said Ennis. "We are using multicasting everywhere to keep network traffic down, and the health monitoring feature has been very valuable to me. I have that tab open all the time on my desktop, because it gives me a snapshot of what's going on with my system on the backend, at any given time."

Other time-saving features like visual tracking are helping their onsite team. According to Patton, "Since they have such a high concentration of cameras, they have been a huge proponent of Visual Tracking, and are one of our best success stories with that feature. Youth assistants can easily go back and follow a person throughout the building, jumping from one camera to the next. They are talking about hours and hours of time saved."

Their youth assistants are located at each school entrance, and actively monitor Security Center to track dubious behaviour, manage visitors and resolve instances of theft from a single intuitive interface. With cardholder badges provided in each video tile upon every card swipe, youth assistants are able to keep a closer eye on physical access to the buildings.

The flexibility of third-party integrations with systems like Hilton's intercom has also made it simple for them to greet visitors at the door, verifying credentials and prompting automatic door opening once vetted. In the future, there are plans for more integrations,

tying in alarms from their intrusion detection system, incorporating immersive maps, and implementing HID Global's EasyLobby Visitor Management system to scan driver's licenses for quick checks against national databases.

Resolving disputes keep getting easier

"Parents are very happy to know we have the security system linked to intercom," said Angela McCullough, Elementary Youth Assistant. "I hear all the time from parents that they feel their kids are more safe. Most parents will make sure they have their ID on them now before they come to school," said Angela McCullough, Elementary Youth Assistant.

Principals and administration staff are also finding Security Center to be an indispensable tool in their day-to-day operations. According to Michael Zaffuts, High School Assistant Principal, "The new security system is a great ally. We use it daily to monitor hall traffic and doors, as well as the parking lots and bus loop. It also helps tremendously when dealing with student discipline issues, helping us to communicate facts to parents."

Instances of theft, vandalism and common school-ground "he-said, she-said" disputes have been resolved within minutes thanks to Security Center. According to Ennis, "Mean time to remediate a situation has decreased incredibly. Principals and assistant principals no longer have to pull eight kids out of class to find out what happened. With Security Center Mobile, they can literally pull up video from their iPad or mobile device, and know the real story. And if they do need to interview students, they can save time and classroom interruption just by checking to see who was involved in the event."

Planning for More District Expansion

With more doors going online soon, Hilton Central is just scratching the surface in terms of system capabilities. Future plans include upgrading to latest version of Security Center which will help them better handle threat levels and lockdown procedures, and setup more event-alarms triggers. They also want to provide remote access capabilities to law enforcement, and take a closer look at license plate recognition to keep unwelcomed individuals off school property.

Finally, when asked for a recommendation to other school districts that are looking to make the switch to unified security, Ennis did not hesitate in responding: "Go! Security Center has been a fantastic system to work with. Every iteration of Genetec's software has huge enhancements in both video and access control. They are a company that keeps pace with innovation, always pushing the envelope and striving for the best customer service and satisfaction."

"We had a very positive experience with Genetec and Security Center, and we knew that this solution would easily accommodate expansion, where we could grow without having to rip and replace every time we wanted to upgrade."

UPDT: 07-27-21