

Case Study

Millard Public Schools

Millard Public Schools strengthens district-wide security with Security Center Unified Platform



American K-12 school district enhances access control throughout 38 buildings and empowers staff with unified security approach

Business challenge

Located in the South West of Omaha, Nebraska, Millard Public Schools (MPS) is a top-rated and nationally-recognized school district in the United States. With 35 schools offering education from kindergarten through to grade 12, and another three administrative buildings, MPS is considered the third largest school district in the state of Nebraska.

Security audits, safety procedures and upgrades to security technology were ongoing at MPS, but when a school shooting shook the community, district security efforts were amplified. According to Curtis Case, Director of Digital Learning, who is responsible for overseeing the district's security services, "It's a fine balance between convenience and safety. Working with a limited budget, our focus really came down to preventing intrusion and controlling access to our buildings during the school day."

At the time, access control was managed mostly by keyed locks, and a few access control readers. Over the years, tracking keys and manually updating staff access rights through an older system became difficult for MPS as ex-employees moved on from their jobs at the school district. Video surveillance was used for after-the-fact investigations, but the poor video quality and lack of storage often frustrated staff who had difficulty retrieving the video recordings or identifying what was actually happening in a scene.

After the Millard community approved a bond for security improvements, MPS considered many solutions and opened up a public tender for the project. MPS eventually chose Prime Communications, a certified and highly-experienced security solutions provider, who led a pilot project at one school using Genetec™ Security Center. The unified security platform allows organisations to manage video surveillance, access control, automatic license plate recognition technology and other key systems within one intuitive solution.

"We cannot 100% guarantee that another incident will not occur, but we wanted a system that would help us screen threats coming from outside and give us tools to quickly respond. The Genetec platform helps us balance convenience, safety and costs very well," explained Case.

Summary

Client name: Millard Public Schools

Organization size: Over 3000 employees

Products: Security Center, Omnicast, Synergis, Mobile, Plan Manager

Industry: Education

Location: Omaha, Nebraska, United States

Partners: Prime Communications, Axis Communications, BCDVideo, Bosch, Commend, DMP, Risco Group

Unified security helps balance convenience and safety

Today, MPS is using Security Center to oversee video surveillance, access control, intrusion detection and intercom within all 38 buildings. "The most beneficial aspect of this upgrade has been our ability to enhance our security processes by better controlling access to our buildings and identifying possible vulnerabilities. The unified platform gives us that added layer of security that helps keep our students safe," said Case.

Every day before school starts and as it ends, Synergis™, the access control system of Security Center, is programmed to unlock all the main doors so that students can freely get in and out of each building. When the bell rings, all doors are locked. This automated schedule of locking and unlocking continues throughout the day, so that busy hall monitors and administrative staff no longer have to worry about physically securing all school doors.

Hall monitors, secretaries, and building administrators now focus on monitoring intercom and door events during the day. If a door is open longer than a few minutes, or when someone buzzes at an intercom station, an alarm sounds in the system, and video from the Omnicast™ video surveillance system is conveniently displayed on their monitor. Staff can then task someone to check that the door is secured, or initiate a conversation with the visitor while watching live video. Once vetted, they can grant or deny access to the building, all without leaving their desk.

Security Center simplifies the management of staff access to systems and buildings

Upon installing the new security platform and migrating an existing access control database with the help of the integrator, MPS discovered that numerous terminated employees still had access to their schools. Today, an integration with Windows Active Directory helps the MPS technology team better manage user privileges and credentials for all staff.

According to Case, “With Active Directory, as soon as someone is terminated, their credentials are removed from our system and they no longer have access to our facilities or our physical security system. That direct link to our Active Directory has been so important, because it gives us better control over who has access to our buildings, video and our data.”

Another perk for MPS is that door schedules can be easily adjusted for after-school community events or public holidays. “We have more flexibility in setting different rules and restrictions. During a public event, we can grant access only through a main door and direct traffic in and out of our buildings,” explained Case.

User-friendly platform helps MPS maximize resources

The entire platform has been more user-friendly for MPS staff with varying levels of technical knowledge. Hall monitors, secretaries, and building administrators work from the map-based interface, called Plan Manager, to quickly locate and monitor cameras, doors, and zones. As the busy school day unfolds, pre-set monitoring tasks help staff oversee specific school activity. For example, hall monitors can click on a ‘lunch-time task’ which displays the most important camera views and zones around the cafeteria.

“In public education, resources are a challenge; we are always having to make cuts and do more with less. A unified security platform that allows us to be more cost-conscious, maximize our assets and raise the level of security for our kids is very valuable.”

“Our users are more independent than before, and less reliant on the district, in terms of investigations, pulling video, and managing door or intrusion alarms. The system allows them to do a lot more on their own,” said Case.

MPS continues to work with Prime Communications and Genetec to enhance system capabilities which lead to a safer school district. “In public education, resources are a challenge; we are always having to make cuts and do more with less. A unified security platform that allows us to be more cost-conscious, maximize our assets and raise the level of security for our kids is very valuable,” concluded Case.

Infrastructure at a Glance

Over 640 Axis Communications cameras (AXIS P3215 and P3215VE models) are managed district-wide using Omnicast. Synergis is supporting over 230 HID readers (HID RP40 and RP10 models) and over 800 door contacts in the district including Bosch and Risco Group REX motion sensors. In order to reduce upgrade costs, MPS re-used existing door hardware by implementing 49 Synergis Cloud Link appliances which support new HID VertX V-100 intelligent controllers. Digital Monitoring Products (DMP) and intrusion panels, as well as 99 Commend intercom stations have also been added to the platform for fully unified security management. BCDVideo Nova Series servers were used at each school for efficient local archiving, while directory and failover servers are housed at central locations.