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K12 Education Case Study

Security and Budgets in Schools: A Balancing Act



With increasing enrollment and new construction underway, the current security configuration wasn't meeting Winchester Thurston's growing needs. Their options were to upgrade already outdated technology or replace the entire system in a one-time installation. Or, the Tucker Automation Solution. How the latest technology not only increased security, but also reduced maintenance costs and provided flexibility for future growth.

The Client

Winchester Thurston School is a nationally recognized independent school in the heart of Pittsburgh that prides itself on educational innovation, rigorous academics and actively engaging each student in a challenging and inspiring learning process.

Winchester Thurston maintains two campuses for their nearly 700 students. The majority of students attend school on the City Campus which consists of two buildings: the main building which holds the Lower and Middle Schools as well as an auditorium, dining hall, athletics wing, dance studio, art gallery and administration offices, and the Upper School building which was constructed in 2006.

The Challenge

With the building of the Upper School, John Charney, Assistant Head for Operations, who is responsible for overseeing security, crisis management and practice drills, was concerned for the access control of the buildings. Because students and staff traverse between the buildings, there needed to be additional safety measures taken to ensure appropriate access. In addition, the school offers space rental to the community, so tracking and overseeing their security was tricky.

The current security system, consisting of proximity card readers for Upper School students and adults, was beginning to lose its functionality and didn't efficiently address security for after-hours and non-employee visitors. The options on the table were to either upgrade the current analog system or to consider replacing an entire system at once.

The Solution

The solution needed to be:

- Modern – utilizing the latest in today's technology.
- Economical and durable - by offering upgrades, not replacements.
- Flexible – able to be installed on an incremental basis, rather than a one-time purchase and install.
- Supported - the vendor needed to offer service and support through preventative maintenance at a reasonable price.

- Most importantly, it needed to work well in order to provide the security needed for an urban campus and adapt to future growth.

Tucker Automation introduced a line of security products that included IP surveillance cameras and IP-based Access Control Readers. The benefits to switching to IP were clear – the Isonas IP access system would eliminate controllers, power supplies and complex wiring. It was also ‘future-proof’, meaning this system could be integrated with the existing network items and offer flexibility to change equipment or integrate additional equipment in the future. “I knew that pulling a cat 5 cable to the device location would generate a small cost, but the work would be done for a long time,” said Mr. Charney, commenting on the flexibility and changeability of the products. Patrick Mercier, President of Tucker Automation adds, “The Isonas Access Control System also has a capability available to read all of the latest encrypted access cards – providing even a higher level of security. The system can be customized according to needs and budget.”

The Results

It wasn’t long before Winchester Thurston experienced the benefits;

- Ability to utilize pin pads, in addition of badges, for access to the buildings. This is a nice feature for the people entering the buildings that do not have badges (non-employee/student). There is no need to issue more badges, yet still easy to keep track of visitors.
- Drastically reduces the requirements of hiring a physical security person at multiple locations for non-school hours. This is especially helpful, as the school is used for community events as well.
- Eliminated issues with lending metal keys. Only strategic employees have metal keys. No more losing track of physical keys. There is more granular control for renters.
- Easy tracking of all that enter and when they exit.
- Removed unnecessary, bulky equipment.
- If someone loses their badge, their ID can be immediately deleted from the system.
- A more secure method for access control and lock downs.

While Winchester Thurston is continually evaluating procedures, hardware and software for the protection of everyone on their campus, they are also continuing to install additional Tucker Automation cameras and readers on a schedule that adheres to their timeline and budget goals.

Mr. Charney reflects, “Five years ago, intruders and lock downs did not receive as much attention as they do today. Where will be five years from now?” No matter, we are certain that John and his diligent team, along with Tucker Automation, will be on top of it.

Tucker Auto-Mation provides manual and automatic door entrance solutions that empower automation, security, intelligence and convenience through our multi-talented people, unrelenting forward innovation spirit and a total genuine dedication of exceeding customer expectations. 1-855-8 TUCKER www.tuckerauto-mation.com

