

STUDENT SAFETY

Alex Holmström reports on the future of school security: cloud-based access control

Access to safe education is a vital part of life and one of society's most basic needs. Since the lives of so many people rely upon school buildings, maintaining security in facilities is of the utmost importance to staff, students and parents. Sadly, we frequently see that the protection expected is not always guaranteed. Considering the concerns that plague schools today, many security solution providers have advanced to face these challenges.

Fortunately, there are security solutions to keep disasters from occurring. One of these measures is access control, typically the foundation of most security frameworks, particularly in school environments. However, for access control to be the backbone of the security infrastructure in a school building, it needs to have the option to incorporate with different systems, like video surveillance, consistently. Access control gives a robust, adaptable and simple security foundation when integrating with other security systems.

As we continue to see advancements in physical security, the presence of the cloud has caused considerable changes in the space of access control. Cloud-based access control not only provides reliable, real-time control of your educational facilities but can also be openly integrated with third-party systems (such as video surveillance) to help mitigate and prevent risks within the school. The cloud ultimately eliminates old hardware and improves on new security protocols with minimal work from the end-user. One of the critical parts of cloud-based access control is that it frequently leverages the power of data. When school safety became a concern many years ago, protocols such as metal detectors and backpack searches quickly became necessary. Unfortunately, this response is generally inadequate and doesn't expand to the degree of security required to prevent threats proactively.

MONITORING MORE

Implementing a cloud-based system permits employees to gather more data beforehand and better prepares them to monitor their campus effectively. In addition, the overall safety and security improve when the access control system combines with smart devices such as surveillance cameras or data such as login and credentials.

Integrating with other systems is another reason why cloud-based solutions are strongly suited for educational buildings. Security personnel used to wait to collect video

to monitor the situation; through cloud-based access control, video surveillance can be seamlessly integrated into the system, providing real-time monitoring and access control through mobile devices.

Access control should not be difficult to use or time-consuming to install. Schools looking to overhaul their security infrastructure need to find providers that develop products around modular designs. With modular architecture and automatic device detection, regardless of previous access control experience, access control can be managed and monitored more directly.

Many access control systems are moving to web-based interfaces, providing access from any PC or mobile device. Adopting an access control solution that includes mobile credentials and physical card readers (if required) is ideal. Since card cloning is a dangerous security issue, select a provider that uses the most advanced technologies and protocols to guarantee network security and prevent cards from being cloned and card readers from being deceived.

CLOUD-BASED SOLUTIONS ALLOW SCHOOLS TO SAVE EXPENSES ON SERVERS AND MAINTENANCE

Hybrid solutions implement a single license from the start of the setup, facilitating efficient and straightforward system functions and updates, thereby keeping installation time to a minimum. Users and installers can benefit from the local system with minimal training or technical support. For example, the rule mapping engine can perform advanced configuration of various system inputs and outputs through an intuitive and user-friendly interface.

The two fundamental security operations used in schools are access control and video surveillance. While many educational buildings have on-premise security hardware and software systems, cloud-based solutions continue to take the market by storm. Cloud-based systems and hosted systems give remote access and immediate management to protect the premises, making it ideal for schools without a robust on-site security team. What's more, it can integrate seamlessly with other systems such as video surveillance,



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resulting in greater situational awareness. On top of the video integration benefit, cloud-based access control and hosted access control solutions offer numerous advantages compared with traditional on-premises security solutions. Cloud-based solutions allow schools to save expenses on traditional equipment like servers and maintenance. Updates are now provided automatically through frequent software updates. Cloud-based access control is also an invaluable tool in helping educational facilities scale their security infrastructure. By leveraging cloud-based infrastructure, less equipment and personnel are required at the facility, and fewer system upgrades are needed. In fact, there are even certain products that can integrate with current on-prem solutions, such as identity and access control management (IAM), ultimately strengthening security and serving as a convenient, flexible, and scalable option for the school's infrastructure.

Hosted access control and cloud-based systems provide the versatility to operate remotely. With this feature, admins can enter the system 24/7 because all locations are configured and managed from web-accessed dashboards, meaning no individual must be on-site in order to open doors or grant access.

Access control involves guarding the edge of the school's property, including each passage and entryway. Robust access control methods will ensure that students, staff and guests know exactly where to enter the front office, what to do once they get inside and how to get back out. Comprehensive access control can go far towards keeping potential offenders out of your facility and often likewise establishes the tone for the remainder of your security efforts. Maintaining safe passageways shows that

your school views wellbeing and safety as a top priority. As mentioned, innovative access control solutions that are cloud-based or hosted often offer numerous advantages in terms of remote management and flexible integration with other systems, and can greatly aid in maintaining security best practices for schools.

RED ALERT

Time is of the essence in an emergency, and just a few moments can mean the difference between safety and tragedy. Therefore, it's essential to maintain structures that trigger a lockdown and alert security to the whereabouts of students, teachers and other staff located in the building. Additionally, systems that can provide and send programmed alerts reduce the time it takes to contact the proper authorities and any delay that may come along with those calls.

Perhaps the essential part of keeping undesired individuals off-premise is restricting where they can enter. Providing a simple sweep across the campus grounds, especially around external and internal perimeters, can be a great way to identify potential issues. For instance, you might choose to replace passageways that aren't monitored or add entryways and locks to particular doorways to restrict their utilisation.

Emergency exits are vital if the need for emergency evacuation should ever arise. However, these exits can also become dangerous when left unmonitored, permitting individuals to enter the structure without checking in through the front desk. Schools can utilise cameras, alerts or disciplinary action to ensure entryways stay shut, except when there's a crisis.

There is no assurance that today's safety and security procedures will work tomorrow. Since the obstacles that affect security are regularly evolving, it is imperative that whatever innovative techniques and processes a school uses, they can develop and adapt to these changes over time. It is also crucial that schools recognise various potential circumstances to ensure the proper individuals know the correct procedures. For instance, the reaction to an active shooter event will be completely different from a student fight in a hallway.

THE PRESENCE OF THE CLOUD HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CHANGE TO ACCESS CONTROL

Typically, the most suitable security procedures are cost-effective and straightforward, such as removing barriers from essential sightlines. It is best to disperse any landscaping or other obstructions that prevent a clear line of vision around entryways. Better permeability gives authorities a clear line of sight to spot dangers and open spaces are less alluring to possible violators. It's most beneficial to integrate surveillance cameras with the access control solution to improve visibility for potential areas at risk of a breach. In an emergency, efficient communication is

essential. Therefore, schools should execute strategies that dictate what information should be given and how that information is conveyed. Among the potential avenues of communication are instant message, email, telephone, text message or the school's paging framework. Despite the selected medium, all correspondence should be two-way to give up-to-date news to school authorities and others on the call. This will empower the proper leaders to decide the appropriate security procedure, whether to remain in lockdown mode or begin exit strategies depending on the particular emergency or circumstance or convey different directions to the educators and staff as the event lasts.

In conclusion, schools seeking to improve their security infrastructure need to choose the access control system that adequately suits their particular needs. Most schools prefer an internal deployment system that includes the flexibility, scalability and remote management provided by hybrid systems. Whether it be cloud-based, hosted, or on-premises, when searching for security solutions for school upgrades, look for providers that offer intuitive, user-friendly, and simple-to-install products. Also, search for a customisable system that grants compatible apps, allowing for real-time monitoring, user management and administration straight from your smartphone. With the ability to enable and disable alarms, lock and unlock doorways, authorise users and observe specific locations on-premises or off, security has never been more intuitive and school facilities have never been more in control ●

Alex Holmström is an experienced executive sales leader in the security industry and takes pride in providing the best service possible. As the Sales Director for ACRE International, Alex is responsible for leading the sales and marketing organisations globally across all territories (Vanderbilt Industries, Open Options and Comnet) for EMEA, APAC and LAM.

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Picture credit: Jason Woodhead