

Case in Point

Boone County Schools Incorporate Electronic Security

In order to provide greater security for its students, teachers and staff, the Boone County, Kentucky School District has implemented a succession of access control improvements that move progressively higher up the pyramid of security solutions. Beginning with the basics of improved key control, the district is now moving toward greater use of electronic security.

Boone County Schools is the third largest district in Kentucky, serving more than 19,000 students from pre-school through 12th grade with a staff of more than 3,200 full and part time employees. Its 21 schools include four high schools, five middle schools and 12 elementary schools, in addition to administration facilities and several other buildings. Boone County has experienced heavy growth because of its proximity to the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport and because it is also a bedroom community to the Greater Cincinnati area.

As the county population grew and new schools were built, different key systems were installed at many of the facilities. Because there was no formal key control policy, it was difficult to determine who had keys or to control their use. Even within the same school, more than one key system often existed. Chief Operating



Randall K. Cooper High School is the newest addition to Boone County (Kentucky) Schools and the first in the district to incorporate online electronic access control.

Officer and Deputy Superintendent Michael Blevins says, When I was principal of Conner High School, I had two separate key systems within my building. When an addition was built, a different system was used, so I had to have different keys for different areas.

Blevins says plans for upgrading security began about five years ago, and efforts have intensified over the past three years. The first step in improving building security was to standardize on a single, higher security key system to secure perimeter doors at the schools. Working with Ingersoll Rand Security Technologies, the district standardized on the Schlage Everest restricted keyway. Key blanks are only available to authorized individuals, which prevents unauthorized duplication and makes it possible to establish a system for controlling key distribution. According to Blevins, the key system upgrade was coupled with implementing access controls on every building.

The next phase was a change to electronic perimeter access control, using Schlage computer-managed standalone locks. These locks are battery powered, so they require no wiring and are easy to install in existing buildings. Access control data is downloaded from a computer to a PDA and then uploaded to individual locks. Audit trail information also can be downloaded from the locks for analysis if required. Keys are no longer used for building perimeter access, although building maintenance personnel keep a mechanical override key for use in case of battery failures or other emergencies.

Blevins says of the move to electronic locks, As an administrator, I loved it. I could control access more easily than with the keys, and it eliminated the

multiple key systems. Now we don't have to get people's keys back in the summer, and if we don't want them to have access, we just shut it off in the database. It also eliminates the need to re-key locks if a key is lost or stolen. When I was at Conner High School, Blevins recalls, we had to rekey the entire building three times because keys were stolen, and that was costly and time-consuming.

With several new schools under construction, Boone County Schools is taking the next step to online networked access control using Ingersoll Rand readers adjacent to perimeter doors, which are equipped with Von Duprin 99EL exit devices. During construction, hard wiring the access control system is easy compared to retrofitting an existing building. The first online system was installed at the newly opened Randall K. Cooper High School. A second will be installed at the Long Branch Elementary School now being constructed near the high school and scheduled to open in 2010. Future schools being planned also will incorporate the online system. Blevins states, We had to bring the older buildings up to where we wanted them to be, and now, as we build new schools, this will become our standard. He adds that, in addition to managing access control, the online system makes it possible to lock down an entire school with the push of a button if necessary.

The new online locks and the standalone offline locks are both managed by a Schlage SMS Enterprise system that seamlessly integrates the technologies and also will allow the district to migrate to new levels as its security requirements change while leaving existing databases, PCs and hardware intact.

Credentials for the electronic access control are primarily iButton fobs, although proximity card badges will be used once the new Long Branch Elementary School opens. Adhesive-backed iButtons can be affixed to the new cards to combine the credentials where necessary.

Other security measures include regulations to control visitors by keeping only the main entrance unlocked so they must enter the office to be identified. Each school also has a deputy sheriff assigned as a School Resource Officer. While one officer may be responsible for several nearby schools, they spend time at each school and get to build relationships with the students, which helps them anticipate and counteract problems.



The Boone County School District is the third largest in the state of Kentucky. They are home to twenty-two (22) schools including four high schools, five middle schools and thirteen elementary schools serving nearly 20,000 students from pre-school through 12th grade and over 3,600 full and part time employees. The Boone County School District recognizes that all children can learn and dedicates itself to providing a challenging educational environment that allows each student to achieve to his or her highest potential as a learner and citizen.

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