

Case in Point

San Mateo High School District Keys in on Security

At the San Mateo Union High School District, a combination of relatively simple but effective access control solutions protects students, teachers and staff with minimal system management requirements.

The District includes a total of six comprehensive high schools, one continuation high school and a large adult school. Six of the schools each have an average student body of 1,600, while one is smaller with approximately 350 students. Average campus size is 40 acres, and together the area of the district's buildings totals about one million square feet.

The District controls door access with a Schlage Everest patent-protected key system. Keys are only available to authorized individuals through professional locksmith channels, which helps prevent unauthorized key duplication, and the keyway is exclusive to the District within a specified geographic area.

An important security feature is the use of Schlage locks that have a Classroom Security Function. This allows an individual to immediately lock a door from inside with a key, eliminating exposure outside the classroom in a hostile intruder situation. The ability to key-lock from inside the classroom allows the teacher to control access and egress in an emergency and prevents the compromise that could occur with an inside pushbutton or thumbturn latch. Todd Lee, of Greystone West Company, the District's construction manager, explains that the locks (sometimes referred to as Columbine locks because of their development in response to that tragedy) were installed here proactively and have proved their effectiveness in periodic drills as well as in an actual lockdown incident.

Lee notes that doors for larger spaces such as lecture halls are equipped with Von Duprin 99 Series exit devices that incorporate key dogging. He explains, They are equipped with LED indicators so that, when the doors are dogged down during the day, a teacher can determine their status from across the room at a glance. If it becomes necessary to secure the room, they can be undogged quickly to provide security.



San Mateo High School is one of seven high schools and several other buildings in California's San Mateo Union High School District.

by any teacher or staff member with a key. This not only eliminates any delays in finding an Allen wrench but avoids the possibility that an unauthorized person could lock the doors if the teacher were out of the room.

In addition to their normal school day usage, most of the buildings are used for evening activities of all types. In California, the Civic Center Act specifies that schools are public facilities and allows users to be charged for the direct cost of the utilities, cleaning and related operating costs. After auditing and evaluating its costs, the District determined the applicable fees to rent facilities such as a gym, theater or football field. Instead of issuing keys, which need to be returned and can lead to loss of control, the District assigns a utility worker to each event. This person unlocks and relocks the building, provides janitorial and cleanup services and generally keeps an eye on things. This ensures that the building is secured and maintains key control, and the cost can be recovered from the user.

Close communications between administrators and plant managers at each campus and the district office help identify security needs. Executive Officer, Maintenance & Operations, Zeke Lyles, CFM, says, At one of our high schools a vice principal realized he needed guard plates on some locks to prevent tampering. Because he notified us, the plates were installed before an incident occurred. Lyles also points out that many things can be accomplished without waiting for a huge budget appropriation. I was able to pick up video cameras at Costco, and since they were installed, our graffiti has dropped by over 75%.

In order to simplify key control and distribution, Lee says that all locks are ordered with construction cores instead of the final keyways. Rather than trying to get the paperwork through to have the contractor order and install the final cylinders, we have the district personnel order and install

them, he explains. That way we don't have to get into working with their system and sharing the keying. It saves time, eliminates a lot of mistakes and keeps everything under the District's control.

Other door hardware solutions used by the district include LCN 4041 door closers, which provide reliability and help ensure that doors close and latch securely, and Von Duprin 9954 removable lockable mullions. These make it easy to move equipment in or out while providing better security than standard bolt-in mullions. Keys for the mullions are restricted to custodial staff to prevent misuse.



The San Mateo School District in San Mateo, California, includes a total of six comprehensive high schools, one continuation high school and a large adult school. Six of the schools each have an average student body of 1,600, while one is smaller with approximately 350 students. Average campus size is 40 acres, and together the area of the district's buildings totals about one million square feet. The mission of the San Mateo Union High School District is to challenge and motivate each student to achieve full potential as a responsible member of our diverse community, in a safe learning environment that promotes intellectual growth, health, creativity, and respect for self and others.

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