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Is your School a Safe-Haven in a Dangerous World?



Keeping schools safe is a challenge every security director, facilities manager and school administrator faces across the country.

School shootings are a far too familiar tragedy, with other more common dangers always around the corner, making it necessary to employ a watchful series of security solutions to protect pupils and staff. Schools can't risk a poorly designed, inefficient system that increases costs while failing to provide the level of security required.

With every public and private school across the country facing similar challenges, the Security Industry Association (SIA) teamed up with the National Systems Contractors Association (NSCA) to create the [Partner Alliance for Safer Schools](#) (PASS) in 2013. PASS is designed to help K-12 schools implement the most effective security technology and systems possible, with a lot of seasoned security professionals contributing to the organization and documents they've published.

In this and other articles, Sabre Integrated wants to help safety personnel in schools make smart choices about how they deploy and recommend the investment of resources, including technology, to ensure the schools they protect are safer from a complex series of threats.

Threats Schools Encounter

Every school faces a different series of unique threats. And yet, whether public or private, most schools are battling a series of overlapping and common threats:

- Discipline is difficult to enforce. Students can pose as much, if not more, of a danger to themselves and teachers than an external threat.
- Liability is a substantial challenge. Teachers, administrators, and security staff need to understand what they can/can't do.
- Safety is no longer the sole responsibility of security staff and fire marshals; in many cases, liability is distributed amongst teams and layers of managers. Clear guidance isn't always easy to find.
- Threats are higher and more complex. From guns and knives to violence, drugs, even cyber- attacks and malicious hacking. Although the goals are still the same: to safeguard students and staff, the risks against them are evolving, making security a complex and moving target.

This is the reality of keeping a school safe in the 21st century.

Parents expect their children to be safe at school—many have chosen your school based on your safety record. Teachers need to feel safe at work and know that students are protected. Principals and boards need to have confidence in those managing safety, as do those that directly manage security in the school.

Budgets come into the equation, too. No matter how much money a school has, there are always going to be questions whether enough is being done? Whether resources are being deployed effectively? As security chief, these are questions that you will need to answer, or topics that should be raised as threats evolve, or when budgets are re-evaluated annually.

Active Shooter Incidents

Experts and most safety chiefs would agree that active shooter incidents are statistically rare; although there have been enough tragedies in recent years to make this a high priority to prevent and defend against in every school.

Between 2000-17, there were 250 [active shooter incidents](#) in the United States (21% of these incidents were in educational facilities), resulting in 799 deaths, according to an FBI report. More shootings have happened since, with many parents and students fearing the situation is getting worse. With national tragedies such as Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland, the fear that a pupil or ex-pupil will walk into a school with an assault rifle keeps head teachers awake at night.

And yet, violence that doesn't involve a gun is far more common. During the 2015-16 school year, there were approximately 750,000 incidents of victimization (theft and non-fatal victimization) that took place in public schools, according to the government-sponsored report, [Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2017](#).

How Should K-12 School Safety Evolve?

Since Parkland, administrators and superintendents have been [asking for guidelines](#) that maintain the same standards across states. Private schools have been taking similar actions. It is difficult to balance the needs of making an environment feel safe and welcoming, a place to learn, and turning a school into a fortress.

From bulletproof glass and armor to active shooter drills and other preventative measures, schools are actively implementing new safeguards to protect students and teachers. Risk, of course, can never be eliminated, only managed. Safety personnel needs to take situational and operational decisions based on real and potential threats in their school, then implement procedures and use technology that will mitigate and reduce risks as much as possible. More about how we can help with that in the next few articles.

Every school has different challenges. If you're looking for new ways to protect your campus, Sabre can help. Call us at 212-974-1700 or [book a free consultation here](#).