

Securing Your K-12 Campus With Electronic Access Control & Student ID Cards

It used to be that simple locks, keys, or a door propped open after hours were the key components to campus “access control.” But with today’s additional focus on campus safety and security, it’s now far more advanced.



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Securing a campus begins with keeping people out of facilities where they have no legitimate business—from an administration office to a restricted classroom or an equipment storeroom. But, it also means providing the appropriate access for students, faculty, and staff—at all times of the day and under varying circumstances.

Limitations of lock-and-key control

Some campuses still protect doors with mechanical locks and keys. They can create effective barriers, but they also have major flaws. Keys can be lost, stolen, or copied an unlimited number of times. Once a lock’s security has been compromised, it must be rekeyed in an expensive and time-intensive process. New keys must be cut and distributed. Key management is challenging at best on a campus with hundreds of doors. Multiply that by the number of students, faculty, and staff keys and the margin for error grows exponentially.

Advantages of electronic access control

Today’s best security practices call for a campus-wide electronic access control system that takes advantage of an enterprise network. Basic system components include computer software that maintains information about campus community members and visitors; key-replacing credentials (e.g. cards, mobile, biometrics) that identify individuals; and readers—the new locks—mounted at critical entries. Together, they add a valuable layer of security, while addressing many of the weaknesses of mechanical key locks.

Within seconds, campus administrators or safety officials can delete a missing credential from the software. A replacement card can be created almost as quickly with no need to alter or replace any readers or the cards of other campus community members. An electronic access control system provides many other advantages including:

- › **Campus-wide coverage:** Systems can be designed to handle any size or configuration of campus. And satellite locations can be added to the system through the enterprise network.
- › **Scalability:** Electronic access control systems can be expanded and components can be moved as a campus grows and/or its needs change.
- › **Wireless capabilities:** Many readers and other system components operate wirelessly allowing them to be placed in remote facilities where it may be impossible or too costly to run cable. Readers can also be added for short-term activity such as temporary contract jobs or special events.
- › **Remote control:** Using the campus network, the access system can be remotely controlled using a smartphone or tablet—improving the productivity of staff.
- › **Temporary access:** Visiting professionals, vendors, and others with a need for temporary access to a specific location or set of locations can be granted access only to those locations for a limited timeframe.



Integration of systems

Intrusion

An enterprise access control system integrates with an intrusion system. If sensors in windows, walls, ceilings, and floors detect a break-in attempt, the access control system displays a campus map pinpointing the alarm site.

Video

Surveillance cameras placed throughout campus provide views of key access control readers. Integrating the two systems allows administrators to receive an immediate visual of alarm sites, providing valuable information before dispatching officers.

Mass notification

A mass notification system provides vital information before, during, and immediately following an emergency. An integrated access system can automatically lockdown all doors or unlock certain doors to allow egress during a fire.



Credentials and readers

Exciting updates in electronic access control are occurring in the individual credentials and devices that read them. Smart cards provide door access while also granting permission to resources such as computers and printers. It can also combine declining balance card functions to create a one-credential system found on many campuses.

With a single card, besides access control privileges, a cardholder can check out library books, make bookstore purchases, attend cultural or sporting events, and buy food from vending machines and dining facilities.

Newer ID credentials use card/reader technology known as NFC or near-field communication and includes contactless cards with more security, storage, and applications.

This also enables native NFC-capable smartphones to act as a contactless keycard to readers on campus, providing additional convenience to students and institution staff.

Permissions, partitions, and zones

Enterprise access systems allow campus officials to add permissions to each card, limiting doors the cardholder may access, as well as the times and days access is granted; automatically updating credentials when employees are hired or leave; and creating occupancy zones preventing people from entering a zoned area once maximum occupancy levels have been reached.

Audit trails

Each time an access credential is used, the reader sends information to the system about the owner's identity and the precise time the credential was used. That provides an audit trail for use by officials when investigating a campus incident or crime. Placing a reader inside a door provides an additional record of who left a facility and when.

Choosing a provider

When it comes time to install or upgrade a campus-wide electronic access control system, choose a provider offering a complete package of controllers, readers, and credentialing technology. It's also important to have a provider that can integrate the system with intrusion, video surveillance, and other critical security layers. and provide ongoing service after installation.

About Blackboard Transact

Blackboard Transact delivers the security and convenience of a single, unified credential that not only meets your campus needs, but transforms your students' overall campus experience with unified transaction, security, and attendance solutions.

[Blackboard.com/transact/k12accesscontrol](https://blackboard.com/transact/k12accesscontrol)

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