

## Integrated Transaction System in a K-12 Environment



### Adlai E. Stevenson High School

- › Students on campus: 4,000
- › Grades: 9–12
- › Campus size: 76 acres, 1,000,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
- › Number of courses offered: 200+

### Challenges

- › Large student body
- › Wanted to emulate college experience for K-12 students
- › Maintain economically disadvantaged students' privacy in relation to being enrolled into the free or reduced lunch program

### Solution

A transaction system that incorporated point-of-sale, vending, iValidate, web deposits and events.

**Adlai E. Stevenson High School implemented a transaction system on a large K-12 campus, encompassing point-of-sale, vending, iValidate, web deposits, and events, availing the school of a high technology solution for student transactions and allowing students a card-based experience similar to a college environment.**

With a student population of more than 4,000 students, Adlai E. Stevenson High School (SHS) serves three full communities and segments of 13 others in Lake County, Illinois. The award-winning high school offers more than 200 courses on its 76-acre campus. With four Blue Ribbon Awards for Excellence from the Department of Education and numerous Advanced Placement options, the school regularly leads the Midwest region in AP participation. Approximately 98% of SHS graduates attend college.

SHS was founded amid strife in 1965 when the community had diverging ideas about educational goals. Residents of the Stevenson area needed to create a new school in mere months. Out of that initial turmoil, Adlai E. Stevenson High School was born. Today, SHS prides itself on its reputation as one of the best high schools in the country.

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## Serving Students Across Campus

For K-12 environments, incorporating a campus card that replicates a college experience can be an important step in preparing students for a post-high school world. When determining how to best serve its student population, SHS had numerous considerations for a campus card transaction system. Any solution they selected needed to perform in four areas: speed, functionality, ease of use, and overall cost.

### Speed

Students are an impatient constituency. More than that, SHS was concerned with throughput on systems around campus, in order to adhere to school schedules and properly serve all students. Point-of-

sale and vending operations needed to occur with efficiency.

### Functionality

SHS required a transaction system that could tackle multiple needs and perform well on each. The administration wanted to address requirements in commerce, validation, deposits, and events. Any solution had to be robust enough to function well in all necessary areas.

### Ease of Use

The students at SHS, from grades 9 through 12, were being groomed to succeed beyond their high school careers, particularly on a modern college campus. The transaction system needed

to emulate the card experience of a higher education environment, while being easy to use for high school students. The system also needed to be easy for administrators to operate.

### Cost

No enterprise solution is implemented without an eye on costs. A system that does what is needed at the right price is always the goal. Like most, SHS had to consider budgetary constraints.



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## Seeking a Solution

An integrated transaction solution streamlines systems across campus, eliminating the problem of silo-ed services requiring multiple mechanisms to authenticate users. With integrated transactions, students can buy lunch, get a drink from a vending machine, and purchase prom tickets, all using their student ID cards.

SHS first selected Blackboard Transact as the best option to suit their needs in 2004. Several years later, the school took another look to see if they still had the best system available. Douglas Kahler, Director of Information Services for SHS, said that reevaluation came in 2010. SHS looked at CBORD and Heartland in addition to Blackboard Transact. In the end, Blackboard Transact was still the “best solution available” for their student and administrative needs, as related by Kahler.

**“Everyone at Blackboard Transact has been great. From our sales persons to support, everyone is friendly and works hard to meet or exceed our needs.”**

**Douglas Kahler**  
**Director of Information Services**  
**Adlai Stevenson High School**

## The College Experience, in High School

The college experience of card-carrying students was replicated at SHS with cards used across campus, including point-of-sale, vending, iValidate, web deposits, and events. The almost 98% of SHS graduates who attend college will enter their campuses with an understanding of how to leverage their student IDs from the dining hall to the ticket window.

SHS has also smoothed away an uncomfortable situation for disadvantaged students on campus. At meal time, no longer does a student need to display their need with a public reckoning at the till. Instead, students receiving subsidized or free lunches purchase their lunches the same as every student—with their student card.

## Lessons Learned

After 12 years of operating an integrated transaction system, SHS is skilled at issuing new cards each August to approximately 1,000 incoming high school freshmen. From that moment, students begin to learn how to use their cards in many aspects of student life. Once they move on from high school into college life, they’ve been provided with a valuable skill set for college and adult life.

“Everyone at Blackboard Transact has been great,” said Kahler. “From our sales persons to support, everyone is friendly and works hard to meet or exceed our needs.” For support needs in particular, Kahler is pleased, “The system has never been down requiring a level 1 call. All of our calls are responded to within an hour or two.”

Through excellent customer service and support, and an integrated transaction system working smoothly across the Adlai E. Stevenson High School campus, their students enjoy a modern campus experience and lessons they’ll take with them as they advance into college life.

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