Utah schools learn to stay safe with Axis.

Weber School District did their homework, creating a common solution for school safety with Axis network cameras.

Organization:
Weber School District

Location:
Ogden, Utah, USA

Industry segment:
Education

Application:
Safety and security

Axis partners:
CompuNet, Genetec

Mission

Searching for a centralized video solution across its 45-plus schools and utility buildings, the Weber School District needed a way to monitor its mix of elementary, junior high and high schools according to each campus' needs. With arbitrary analog equipment used across the board, the District leaned on the IT Department to determine a best-fit platform that could be used countywide.

Solution

Using fiber lines connecting all schools to a data center sitting with the IT Department, the District settled on a mix of Axis network cameras and video encoders. As they transition from failing analog products, new Axis cameras are being installed. In locations that previously required a cluster of low-resolution analog devices, the District is able to select as little as one 5-megapixel IP camera to cover the same space.

After the initial design of one school, the IT Department has stuck to the same selection of 5-6 Axis camera models to duplicate the system between schools.

Result

With many administrators reluctant at first to build up video coverage at their schools, the District has seen a high level of success with principals exporting video as needed to resolve any conflicts. Storing two-plus weeks of footage from all cameras allows the school to draw from the most pertinent data while primarily using it in a reactive manner. The unified solution in the District has since brought other districts from across the state to check out their setup as plans to bolster safety plans with video coverage are on the rise.

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Bringing everybody together

Situated across the northern Utah city of Ogden, the Weber School District is composed of 45 school facilities, a mix of elementary, junior high and high schools. The District is responsible for the safety and security of over 31,000 students to go along with more than 3,500 faculty and staff as the seventh-largest school district in the state.

The chief concern for these schools is the safety of their students. With that, there is always a concern for knowing who is on campuses, when they arrive and leave and if they are supposed to be there or not. Each school level provides its own focuses, such as elementary schools adding extra coverage of playgrounds and outdoor areas to make sure students are secure and only leaving with the right people.

As each individual school spent years buying their own cameras and DVRs for safety reasons, they eventually gathered with the District's IT Department to find a unified solution. Over a couple of years, the IT Department switched the schools all over to a central VMS, supplying AXIS M7010 Video Encoders to bring the analog system onto a network and focusing all future efforts on IP cameras.

Calculating a first-rate solution

While the number of cameras per property varies anywhere from 15 at a smaller elementary up to 80 or more at a larger high school, the Weber School District initially used the AXIS Design tool to determine an efficient solution now implemented across the board with a simple mix of Axis network cameras.
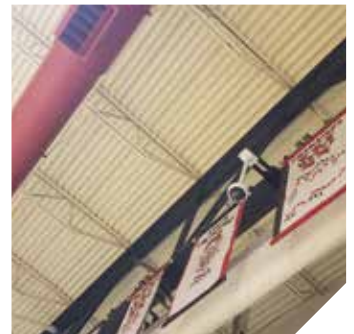
In outdoor spaces, the District decided on AXIS P1427-E Network Cameras, bullet-style cameras that help to monitor parking lots and playgrounds. Moving indoors to the common hallway spaces, AXIS M3005-V Fixed Dome Network Cameras help to capture the interactions among students in order to deter from any negative activity.

The District relies on the cameras for reactive assistance after any incidents rather than putting the resources and time toward live monitoring. "Even without watching live," noted Casey Dalpias, Systems Engineer for the Weber School District, "we pull up a lot of footage, and [the schools] pull a lot for fights and so on."

Centralized at a data center with the IT Department, each school has fiber infrastructure in place to transmit feeds. The District trusts its licenses on Genetec Security Center 5.3 to process what amounts to more than three weeks' worth of footage from about 945 total cameras.

The priority camera placements are the entrances to school buildings, so light-sensitive AXIS P3354 Network Cameras are commonly found in these spaces. Where windows and doorways are prominent, Dalpias settled on AXIS P3225-LV Network Cameras with a concentration on their ability to pick up both dark and well-lit areas within the same image. "It's got that wide dynamic capture, which is way better for us so we're going to actually see out of the doors rather than just a glare."

Most recently, the District mounted an AXIS Q3709-PVE Network Camera in one of its gymnasiums, proving that efficiency with one powerful camera can accomplish the tasks of an entire group of analog cameras. Using its multi-sensor panoramic view, the District is able to observe the entire basketball court and bleacher space in 4K resolution.

Filling up a book of reports

"The schools were just so excited to be able to pull footage to show who hit who between two kids and what happened," Dalpias commented. "The bullying is a huge issue and they want to figure out what's going on in those situations. The cameras have been very valuable for that."

Minor incidents continue to arise throughout the academic year, and the schools respond quicker than ever with video evidence supporting them. When a principal reported that somebody was letting air out of all of the tires in a section of the parking lot not covered by a camera, the IT Department swiftly moved in to install one. The result: a student was instantly caught with clear recognition of their identity.

In a further instance, a group of people came over to one of the portable units at a school during off hours and started a fire. While somebody in the area noticed the smoke and called the fire department, the school was then able to look at the video and identify the individuals.

The cameras have added a complimentary resource for the schools as well when identifying catalysts behind facility problems. When one school had flooding from a water purifier in a back room, administrators used footage to reveal that nobody had entered that area for two-plus days prior. In proving that it was a mechanical error, the manufacturer had to foot the bill.

"That saved thousands of dollars for the school," said Dalpias. "There'd be no way that they'd be able to prove that otherwise without the Axis cameras."

Network learning curve

The results have proven to be numerous for the District, as many administrators who may have been reluctant at first are now commonly seen using the footage to solve problems and keep more peaceful school environments.

"When we initially started, we have quite a few principals without cameras in their school. They would say, "We don't need cameras. That's just silly," Dalpias described. "Those same principals are the ones now exporting video all the time. They use it so much to resolve conflicts. I haven't talked to one principal that hasn't seen a benefit from it."

While break-ins, theft and vandalism are of importance, the District maintains that most significantly they are now prepared for any higher profile incidents should they occur. Administrators can even access video on their mobile devices should they get an alarm call.

"I think it's all been a great deterrent and also a great way to catch criminal activity," Dalpias concluded. "But I feel a lot more confident that if there was a big incident, that we now have something to back us up."

About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the market leader in network video, Axis is driving the industry by continually launching innovative network products based on an open platform - delivering high value to customers through a global partner network. Axis has long-term relationships with partners and provides them with knowledge and ground-breaking network products in existing and new markets.

Axis has more than 2,100 dedicated employees in more than 50 countries around the world, supported by a global network of over 80,000 partners. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

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