# School security on a budget

**Getting the most for the money**

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Security risks facing your school or district are greater than ever. Yet, your budget may not reflect the rising challenges before you.

By most accounts, funding will always be a problem for school districts. School administrators and security practitioners need to be vigilant in looking for creative ways to find solutions – and funds.

The good news is that everyday actions can get you there. Here are some ways to help ensure the safety of your students, staff and property, yet stay within your budget constraints.

**Facility considerations**

**Sightlines:** Evaluate whether or not your administrative offices have a clear line of sight to the approach to the building, entrance and hallways. Consider relocating offices to improve the view.

**Computer labs:** Move computer labs and other valuable property to spaces in the center of the facility, away from windows and openings. This can help reduce the risk of break-ins and theft.

**Entrances/exits:** Retrofit locks on entrance and exit doors with electronic security. Also, ensure the entrances and exits are well marked and well lighted, from inside and out. Mechanical locks and key systems form the foundation for your security management solution. Use them to secure doors that do not require electronic security. Patented key systems also work well with electronic security solutions and eliminate the risk of duplicated keys.

**Exterior facility lighting:** Install lighting around the exterior of the building to improve quick surveillance and safety.

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**Security technology upgrades**

**Electronic systems:** Consider installing door monitoring sensors that respond when the door is opened, card access readers, classroom locks with a remote pushbutton fob for lockdown, phones in classrooms, call buttons at teachers' desks, metal detectors, and panic buttons. Video surveillance cameras with time/date recording are affordable options for monitoring interior and exterior spaces.

Your maintenance staff can install and maintain many of these security enhancements, reducing your costs and adding valuable benefits over time.

Access control systems that rely on personal identification codes and electronic credentials offer a heightened level of protection and control, and yet they are convenient for the user. Programmable devices provide enhanced convenience and security for people who are authorized to access a facility. These devices also eliminate costly issues with lost keys or re-keying locks. The systems allow additional users at any time.

Application managed systems allow the addition and deletion of users, track usage, and manage data without installing a facility-wide network. Since these controls are easy to update and change programming, they offer superior security for less money. In addition, application managed solutions cost less to install, compared to a networked access control system.

Networked access control systems allow management of a number of devices from a single computer. They provide oversight of a large number of users and entrances in real-time. Advanced network access control products are most effective when part of an electronic access control system. Products include biometric, proximity and smart card readers, and both wired and wireless integrated locking solutions. In some applications, it is not feasible to connect every access point in a facility to a central network.

Wireless networked solutions eliminate costly installation of wires and cables. Ideal for newly constructed facilities or for retrofit in an existing building, these systems are completely integrated, combining a credential reader, electrified lock, door position switch and request-to-exit. They also use a secure encryption system to ensure data transmission will not be compromised.

**Facility Integration:** Facility integration solutions represent the highest degree of security, allowing easy management of people and openings throughout the entire facility. These systems seamlessly combine access and video technology into a single interface that improves awareness of situations and enables faster response times.

**Site considerations**

**Planting design:** Minimize hiding places around your school grounds. Avoid planting groups of trees and shrubs around entrances and corners. Create large, open areas surrounding planting clusters.

**Keeping the distance:** Extend the distance from buildings to parking lots and drop-off areas to increase visibility. Place barriers such as raised planting walls and trees between parking areas and building entrances.

**Safe site clear zones:** Keep plantings trimmed less than three feet tall to provide a clear line of sight for staff inside the facility, as well as pedestrians and drivers outside the facility.

**Lighting (landscape and parking):** Provide appropriate lighting for parking lots and well lit walking paths to entrances.

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