

SECURITY CASE STUDY
SCHOOLS



ORGANIZATION: MIDDLE COUNTRY SCHOOL DISTRICT, NY



SECURITY CLIMATE

A RECENT REPORT RELEASED JOINTLY BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF JUSTICE AND EDUCATION REVEALED THAT, BETWEEN 2005 AND 2006, 86% OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORTED AT LEAST ONE CRIME DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR. STUDENTS FROM VARIOUS SCHOOLS WERE ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THEIR PERCEIVED SAFETY IN THEIR SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS VISIBLE SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN BY THE SCHOOLS. THE REPORT FOUND THAT 66% OF STUDENTS SAW ONE, OR MORE, SECURITY CAMERAS AT THEIR SCHOOL IN 2007. THIS FIGURE REPRESENTS AN 8% INCREASE FROM STUDENTS POLLED IN 2005. THE REPORT IDENTIFIED A 7% INCREASE IN SCHOOLS WITH VISITOR SIGN-IN REQUIREMENTS FROM 1999 TO 2007. IN ADDITION, THE REPORT FOUND THAT:

- IN 2005, 46% OF SCHOOLS REPORTED 20 OR MORE VIOLENT INCIDENTS.
- IN 2006, STUDENTS AGES 12-18 WERE VICTIMS OF ABOUT 1.7 MILLION NON-FATAL CRIMES AT SCHOOL.
- IN 2007, 10% OF MALE STUDENTS AND 5% OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN GRADES 9-12 REPORTED BEING THREATENED OR INJURED WITH A WEAPON ON SCHOOL PROPERTY WITHIN THE PREVIOUS YEAR.
- IN 2007, 22% OF STUDENTS IN GRADES 9-12 REPORTED THAT THEY HAD ACCESS TO ILLEGAL DRUGS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.

SECURITY CHALLENGES

THE MIDDLE COUNTRY SCHOOL DISTRICT COVERS APPROXIMATELY 16 SQUARE MILES IN THE TOWNSHIP OF BROOKHAVEN. IT IS COMPOSED OF EIGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, TWO PRE-KINDERGARTEN/KINDERGARTEN CENTERS, TWO MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND TWO HIGH SCHOOLS. THE SCHOOLS EDUCATE THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS FROM THE LONG ISLAND AREA EVERY SCHOOL DAY. LIKE MANY SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES, MIDDLE COUNTRY FACES DAILY SECURITY CHALLENGES THAT CAN POSE RISKS TO THE STUDENTS AND STAFF. THE SHEER SIZE OF THE DISPERSED SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESENTS ITSELF AS ONE OF THE MAIN SECURITY CHALLENGES.

WITH SO MUCH GROUND TO COVER/PROTECT, PROBLEMS CAN ARISE QUICKLY, AND FROM ANY LOCATION. FRANK FIORINO, MIDDLE COUNTRY'S DIRECTOR OF BUILDINGS & GROUNDS/SECURITY, HAS FOUND THAT THE BEST SOLUTION IS TO WORK WITH A FLEXIBLE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE SECURITY COMPANY THAT ENABLES HIM TO LEVERAGE HIS EXTENSIVE BACKGROUND IN SECURING SCHOOLS.

SECURITY SOLUTIONS

"WHAT WE HAVE AT MIDDLE COUNTRY IS A SECURITY FORCE COMPOSED OF AT LEAST 70 OR 80 PERCENT OF RETIRED OR ACTIVE POLICE OFFICERS," SAYS FIORINO. "WE FIND THAT THEY TREAT THE STUDENTS WITH RESPECT, AND IN TURN THEY ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT. WE FIND THAT ANY FIGHTS, VANDALISM, AND ANY OTHER VIOLENCE, IS KEPT TO A MINIMUM DUE TO THE PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE WE HIRE. WE TELL THEM [ARROW SECURITY] WHO TO HIRE AND THEY WORK WITH US IN THAT WAY. I INTERVIEW EVERYONE THAT THEY SEND, AND IF I DON'T WANT THEM, I DON'T TAKE THEM."

FIORINO HAS FOUND THAT ONE OF THE KEY ELEMENTS OF ENSURING A SECURE ENVIRONMENT IS TO HAVE THE SECURITY TEAM MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE STUDENTS AND STAFF. "ALL OF THE GUARDS ARE PROACTIVE AND THEY KNOW EVERY KID. THIS IS SOMETHING WE ASK THEM TO DO. IT'S A LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT, WITH A LARGE AMOUNT OF CHILDREN. THEY KNOW THE TROUBLE SPOTS AND THEY ALSO HAVE A GOOD RAPPORT WITH THE KIDS. KIDS TELL GUARDS OF ANY PROBLEMS THEY SEE AND THE GUARDS TAKE CARE OF IT." THIS PERSONAL/COMMUNITY APPROACH TO SECURITY EXPANDS UPON THE BENEFITS OF SECURITY TECHNOLOGY AND MAN POWER, AND ALSO HELPS TO CULTIVATE AND MAINTAIN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT.

AS PART OF THE ONGOING SECURITY EFFORT AT MIDDLE COUNTRY, SECURITY GUARDS ARE ASSIGNED TO ALL BUILDINGS 24 HOURS A DAY. SEVERAL PATROL CARS, FEATURING TWO-WAY RADIOS AND OTHER SECURITY AND COMMUNICATION DEVICES, MONITOR SCHOOL GROUNDS AND REPORT REGULARLY TO A BASE STATION. THESE PATROLS WORK CLOSELY WITH THE LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT, AS WELL AS THE CUSTODIAL STAFF AT EACH OF THE SCHOOLS. "ALL OF OUR BUILDINGS ARE ALARMED AND ARE UNDER CONSTANT VIDEO SURVEILLANCE," SAYS FIORINO. "WE TRY TO HAVE AS MUCH UP-TO-DATE TECHNOLOGY AS POSSIBLE."

WE HAVE A SYSTEM WHEREBY THEY [ARROW SECURITY] CAN FIND ANY PERSON, EXACTLY WHERE THEY ARE, AT THAT TIME.” ADDITIONAL SECURITY GUARDS ARE ASSIGNED TO THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS DURING THE DAY, AS WELL AS ON WEEKENDS. IN ADDITION TO DEPLOYING HIGHLY TRAINED GUARDS AND ADVANCED SECURITY TECHNOLOGY, MIDDLE COUNTRY ALSO APPLIES PROACTIVE MEASURES TO ITS VISITATION POLICY. WHEN GUESTS VISIT THE SCHOOL, THEY MUST STOP AT THE PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE TO OBTAIN INFORMATION AND TO SIGN IN BEFORE GOING ANYWHERE IN THE BUILDING. THESE STRICT SECURITY PROCEDURES HELP TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF ALL STUDENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS AT MIDDLE COUNTRY.

FIORINO’S FORMULA OF COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS, TECHNOLOGY AND WELL-TRAINED GUARDS HAS WON THE DAY AT MIDDLE COUNTRY. “THE REASON WE CHOSE ARROW IS THAT THEY HAD THE 24-HOUR MONITORING SERVICE. IT MONITORS ALL OF OUR ALARM SYSTEMS. THEY WERE ALSO LARGE ENOUGH TO SUPPORT OUR NEEDS. WHEN A PROBLEM AROSE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMPANY, OR A PERSON OF AUTHORITY WOULD COME DOWN TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM. I FIND THEM TO BE PROFESSIONAL AND THEY GIVE ME THE LEEWAY OF HIRING WHO I NEED.”