

CREATING A SECURE ENTRY PROCESS

In recent years, many schools across the United States have invested significant resources to create secure entries in an effort to prevent entry by unauthorized individuals who have the intent to do harm. Unfortunately, we observe that many of these schools are not receiving the full benefit from the investment because they are not aligning the three key elements of an efficient and effective process.

At SEC, we believe safety and security processes need to be:

1. Properly designed
2. Sufficiently equipped
3. Bolstered by the adherence to established and trained protocols

If any of these elements are missing from the secure entry process, those investments equate, in effect, to the purchase of very expensive doorbells.

PROPER DESIGN

During the design phase, it is extremely important to make the correct decisions that will result in the enhancement of your school's security while minimizing inconvenience. One of the biggest errors a school can make during the design stage is to overlook the impact the design will ultimately have on operations. In this case, the impact on individuals whom should have ease of access or those individuals who will be responsible for controlling access. Designs that result in entry delays caused by backups create frustration and often result in access protocols eventually being bypassed for the sake of convenience. Designs that do not position access control features, such as camera monitors and door lock release buttons, in convenient locations for staff members often end up going unused.

SUFFICIENTLY EQUIPPED

The number of choices of security access control features is almost infinite and can seem overwhelming. We recommend that schools start by focusing on what they want the end result of their secure entry process to look like. Critical questions to ask are:

- Can students and staff enter the school efficiently?
- Can visitor access be controlled?
- Can staff members clearly see and communicate with visitors attempting to gain entry?
- Are the entry design features durable enough to deny or delay an unauthorized entry?

When selecting components, limit your focus to those components that allow you to answer yes to all these questions.

PROTOCOLS AND TRAINING

At SEC, we believe the most critical element in creating a successful entry process is proper training of the staff members who have a responsibility associated with controlling access. Unfortunately, we have found this element most consistently absent. Staff members should be given very clear entry process protocols and the adherence to these protocols should be regularly monitored by school leadership. Additionally, we recommend that staff members receive training in threat recognition, such as recognizing non-verbal hostile indicators, and de-escalation strategies. Most importantly, they should be given both the authority and the capability to initiate facility-wide emergency alerts if they identify a threat to or failure of the school entry way.

A thoughtfully designed and properly equipped entry process that is controlled by a trained staff can significantly enhance the safety and security of your school. Follow these guidelines to ensure your entry process achieves its full potential.