# Access Control and Security

# Secure in the Cloud

*Chicago school district implements remote access control solution.*

BY MONIQUE MERHIGE-MACHADO

**Today, more than ever, schools want to be certain their security systems are keeping staff and students safe. Many school districts across the nation are now investing in upgrades and expanding their existing security system infrastructure. Cloud-based access control systems can offer schools the flexibility to control access remotely, an essential requirement today.**

## SECURITY CHALLENGES

With active-shooter incidents on the rise over the years and the global pandemic creating havoc for schools, administrators and faculty are faced with an influx of challenges. From lockdowns to remote learning, schools need flexibility in their security solutions.

Nobody knows this more than Advanced Wiring Solutions. The low-voltage electrical contractor has worked with more than 18 schools across eight different districts and understands their specific needs. "Strict specifications need to be followed when it comes to helping schools become safer in these trying times," says Chris Beissmann, Senior Project Manager at Advanced Wiring Solutions. "We work closely with school administrators and IT directors and understand their pain points and what types of solutions are available."

Another big issue facing schools is controlling who can access the facility with keys. Schools find it extremely difficult to track who has keys to the buildings, and with employee turnover, it is imperative for administrators to collect keys of all prior staff members. "Deploying a cloud-based access control solution eliminates the need for keys, as staff can access the building using ID badges that verify their credentials," Beissmann says. "This takes the burden off school administrators to collect and track physical keys from previous employees."



188 ISONAS RC-04 reader controllers were placed on every access point in the Chicago area school district's six buildings.

## A LESSON IN ACCESS CONTROL

When a school district in the southwest suburbs of Chicago needed to control the flow of traffic during after-hour events, it wanted to find the right access control solution that could easily integrate with its alarm system and create one unified solution. With six buildings within the district, it was important to be able to manage access at all buildings on one unified platform.

The school district had three main priorities for the security upgrade: control the flow of traffic during after-hour events, eliminate the need for keys to manually lock and unlock doors, and to finally have the ability to utilize remote access. Safety was a huge priority at the school district, which included keeping students and staff safe and secure in all six buildings. Without being able to control unauthorized visitors at all entrances, there was no way to effectively protect everyone in the school district.

The time had come to implement a new state-of-the-art access control solution that could easily expand on an existing system. On the recommendation of the school IT director, ISONAS™ was awarded the project. ISONAS is an access control manufacturer of IP-based solutions and part of the Allegion family. The school district believed ISONAS Pure IP™ was the right cloud-based technology to overcome their challenges. With the recommendation from the IT director and a strong relationship with Advanced Wiring Solutions, the school district moved forward with the security upgrade at high speed.

The project was on a tight schedule and required installing 188 ISONAS RC-04 reader controllers on every access point in the school district's six buildings in under three months. "It's been a pleasure working with ISONAS from the onset of this project to completion," says Michael Sanfratello, President of Advanced Wiring Solutions. "From the bidding stage to deploying the access control system, ISONAS worked closely with the architects, engineers and the school

district to develop specifications for the design and installation in order to make it a perfect deployment."

In addition to the ISONAS hardware, the ISONAS Pure Access Software was deployed by the school district and provided a user-friendly remote access functionality. The software is a cloud-based access control application that provides users the ability to manage their access control from anywhere, at any time, on any device. During the installation of the ISONAS RC-04 reader controllers, Advanced Wiring Solutions was able to program each reader using a mobile phone or tablet through the cloud and easily test for functionality. And all this was accomplished in one trip. In addition, the ISONAS Pure Access 3.3 cloud-based application integrated seamlessly with the school district's fire alarm system to release magnetic door holders in case of an emergency.

After installing the ISONAS reader controllers, the school district successfully secured each entrance way at its six facilities and no longer needed to rely on keys for access. The school district could rely on an access control solution to help track who entered exterior doorways in all buildings. In addition, the school district could now easily monitor all controlled doors remotely and set access schedules for regular school hours and after-hours special events and activities. Controlling the flow of traffic was important, as certain areas were restricted to staff only.

The future of access control looks bright and continues to adapt with the ever-changing needs of schools across the nation. With cloud-based access control systems in place, remote lockdowns are made possible in emergency situations and daily access can be controlled effectively. Schools can now get a clearer picture of who is actually entering the premises day and night without having someone physically present. Moving forward, access control will continue to be an important part of school security plans and remain a top priority. +

**MONIQUE MERHIGE-MACHADO** is President, Infusion Direct Marketing. Email: *monique@ infusiondirect.com*.