

Prevention Through Partnership: How One School District's School Safety Investment Pays Off



"The ability to rapidly communicate a change in the security posture of school, which we now know is locked down. Doing that immediately? Huge capability. When seconds matter, we can't wait for minutes to pass."

JEREMY GULLEY, SUPERINTENDENT



The Jay School Corporation



CHALLENGE

There is power in prevention.

Like schools nationwide, The Jay School Corporation in Portland, Indiana, believes that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

For Jeremy Gulley, Jay Schools Superintendent, prevention isn't only about large-scale and newsworthy events. It's about supporting his staff with the day-to-day school occurrences. Things like escalated student behaviors, elopement, medical emergencies, and suspicious persons on a school campus.

Finding reliable emergency response technology proved difficult for Gulley and his team. Jay Schools had experience with other emergency response technology. "The previous products we acquired were cell phone-based apps. So you automatically have trouble with folks who say, 'this is my private cell phone and no one can compel me to download an app.' There's a point to that. And then also just the lack of reliability and wi-fi and cell phone connections."

In looking for more reliable solutions, Gulley and his team, including School Resource Officer Cody Jesse, visited another school with a CENTEGIX CrisisAlert™ emergency response system. Soon, CrisisAlert was on all Jay School Corporation school campuses.

SOLUTION

The CENTEGIX CrisisAlert System empowers all school staff members to report emergencies instantly. First responders can address any situation that may occur on a school campus. Wearable silent panic badges trigger alerts with the press of a button. A three-press alert notifies school-level responders of common situations that require immediate assistance, like medical events or student altercations. The badge responds with a vibration to let the user know that help is on the way. Room-level location technology allows the staff member to stay on the scene to help and support will come to their exact location on campus.

Any badge-wearer can trigger a school-wide alert by repeatedly pressing their button until they see strobe lights activated. This alert immediately notifies the school's safety team, district personnel, and local law enforcement of a dangerous situation on campus. Administrators can broadcast emergency codes to the entire campus and beyond—keeping everyone in the loop.

Officer Jesse's favorite part of the CrisisAlert system is that any staff member can activate a school-wide alert. Before Jay Schools partnered with CENTEGIX, an alert would have to come from the front office PA system. But what happens if a threat initiates there? "The idea that anybody can call a lockdown is huge. And not only that, 9-1-1 is notified immediately, and they have the location of who activated the lockdown with an app... That's good knowledge, especially for law enforcement. And let's say a shooter were to go through the school. Each time someone activates, it's gonna give you a new location as well. You have instant knowledge of where it occurs. It saves time. You don't have to pick up a phone to call 9-1-1. It's already dialed. 9-1-1 help is on the way." He also pointed out that because the badge operates independently of wi-fi and cellular service, "if your internet goes down, you're not going to lose it. It's reliable."

Officer Jesse noted that the CrisisAlert strobe lights, placed strategically throughout the schools' campuses, are color-coded to match alert placards throughout the building. "We have those placards in the classroom. The students see them everyday. And now when the strobes go off, they have an auto PA, they have color and they'll know, 'Hey, this is what I'm supposed to do.'"

"This hardware and this mesh [CrisisAlert] system—and I'm certainly not an expert on the backend— what I just wanted to know is, "can I count on it? Can I reliably count on it?" And that has been solved. So a lesson learned for us is, it's like anything else in life. You get what you pay for. So there are a lot less costly options, but if they don't work, then you've not made this campus safe. It may make you feel better, but it's not effectively addressing the problem."

RESULTS

Gulley, Jesse, and The Jay School Corporation are seeing a return on their investment in CENTEGIX CrisisAlert.

Notes Gulley:

- "We've had 71 instances since the start of the school year where teachers hit the three-button send-help feature. And those were student behaviors. So it might be a special needs student who the school staff member needs some help with or a student who may have an anxiety attack or a seizure, or just a situation where kids are making bad choices and a staff member needs help. So 71 times we've had that pressed and used."
- "We've had three medical incidents it's been used so far this year."
- "We've had—three times—a young child run from the school, and we were able to use [the badge]."
- "Nine altercations—kids are gonna make bad choices—and nine instances we were able to get help with that."

Besides these alerts, Gulley pointed out two other events that required a classroom hold and a school hold. Both of these situations were resolved without further escalation or incident.

The positive response from school staff and the community is further validation that partnering with CENTEGIX CrisisAlert was the right decision for the Jay School Corporation. Teachers know the vulnerability of schools. By investing in technology that keeps employees safe by empowering them to get help when and where they need it, Jay School Corporation is sending a clear message that it supports its teachers. Because the wearable badges make it easy to trigger an alert in times of stress and because the training is simple and straightforward, teachers and support staff bought into the system quickly. Teachers report feeling confident that they can communicate and get help. Furthermore, when tragedies occur in other schools around the country, Jay Schools' parents make a point of discussing the peace of mind that CrisisAlert brings them. As Gulley puts it, "They know that we will go to any length to protect the schools."

With CrisisAlert, Jeremy Gulley, Officer Jesse, and the Jay School Corporation can mitigate day-to-day school emergencies and have the power to address bigger events.

Prevention through a partnership with CENTEGIX.

