



Yakima School District's Approach to Safety Was Impressive

Yakima School District serves 16,000 students across 1 preschool, 14 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools in the state of Washington. It is also the 2nd largest Latino-majority district in the state, 4th largest in Eastern Washington, and overall the 20th largest district in the state.

Safety has always been a top priority for the Yakima School District. The district has established a multi-layered safety approach to protect all students and staff while on school grounds. This includes:

- An anonymous tip app for parents, students, and staff
- Armed School Safety Officers with prior law enforcement experience
- Cameras throughout the campus
- Interior and exterior door locks for access control
- Vestibules at school entrances
- Safety Lighting
- Fencing
- Panic buttons on walls and teacher's desks
- A parent app with real-time updates
- Immediate media releases

The Yakima School District's leadership believed they had planned for every scenario in which student or staff safety could be jeopardized as well as how they'd resolve the issues. But, when a serious incident occurred, the Yakima School District quickly uncovered major gaps in their safety approach.

The Most Serious Situation Revealed Cracks in the Safety Approach

On March 15, 2022, Yakima School District faced the unthinkable—a school shooting. Two students got into an altercation in one of the high school parking lots that led to shots being fired.

Trying to evacuate the campus to avoid this incident from escalating, the school's security monitor sent staff and students in the wrong direction—closer to the incident itself. On that day,



"We learned that those slight delays can make all the difference."

Stacey Locke,
Deputy Superintendent at
Yakima School District

Customer Highlight

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02 While working to identify what went wrong on March 15th, Locke and her team found gaps in their original safety plan. They needed a solution that would indicate where an incident was taking place and provide seamless communication to alert all staff members. After some searching, Locke came across CrisisAlert™, the fastest, easiest, and most discreet way to get help in any crisis.

03 Yakima School District chose the CENTEGIX Safety Platform for its CrisisAlert badge solution out of five other incident response solutions/systems, largely due to CrisisAlert being wearable and not being app-based—both of which enable 100% adoption rate among staff as personal devices are not needed—and room-level accuracy of where an incident is taking place. Within six months, the system was fully implemented.

the district experienced firsthand how every second matters in emergency situations. And how faulty their multi-layered safety plan was. Leading people in the wrong direction can make a situation go from bad to worse. Thankfully, staff members realized this mistake and no one was injured.

After the situation had deescalated, school leaders looked back on what went wrong and how they could make improvements to prevent another similar situation. In this moment, they realized how vital it is to have real-time location information to indicate where an incident is taking place.

Stacey Locke, Deputy Superintendent at Yakima School District, knew that something needed to change. Stacey joined the Yakima School District in 2000 and has held various leadership roles including Executive Director of Safety and Security for the district's central office where she was deeply involved in the development of school safety protocols.

While working to identify what went wrong on March 15, 2018, Locke and her team found gaps in their original safety plan. They needed a solution that would indicate where an incident was taking place and provide seamless communication to alert all staff members. After some searching, Locke came across CrisisAlert, the fastest, easiest, and most discreet way to get help in any crisis. Part of the CENTEGIX Safety Platform, the wearable badge allows any staff member to send an alert that instantly reaches administrators and responders. Three pushes of the panic button on the badge sends an alert to designated on-campus responders—usually an SRO, nurse, or assistant principal—to get a rapid response to a physical altercation, health crisis, or any situation in which additional staff support is needed.

CENTEGIX was founded in response to concerns that traditional school safety technology didn't reflect the realities of the classroom or capture the best technologies for moments in crisis. Conversations with school leaders indicated that school staff needed an effective solution for incident response, which led to the development of an effective solution built on innovative technology.

Now reflecting back, Stacey shared that if the staff in the Yakima School District had the CrisisAlert badge, they could have pressed the button 8 times to initiate a campus-wide lockdown and notify security, staff, and first responders where on campus the incident was taking place—reducing response time and overall duress.

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After 24 Hours of Implementation, CrisisAlert Saved a Life

On November 30, 2022, Yakima School District trained staff members at one of the middle schools on how to use CrisisAlert for the very first time. The very next day, the wearable badge saved a staff member's life.

A school counselor was suddenly not feeling well in her office. Her vision had become blurry and she couldn't see the numbers on the phone to dial for help, but thankfully, was wearing the CrisisAlert badge and was able to use the panic alert button before losing consciousness. By using the badge, staff and security knew precisely where the incident was taking place, which saved time and ultimately, her life.

When the counselor lost consciousness, she slid out of her chair to the floor behind her desk where she was no longer visible to anyone passing by her office door. Since her office was also locked, it is likely that hours would have passed before someone would have noticed what was going on. But, with the help of CrisisAlert, staff and security knew immediately where to go and were able to get into the locked office and call 911. The counselor was rushed to the hospital and doctors reported that she had a heart attack.



After one day of implementation, the Yakima School District saw the ROI in having CrisisAlert.

“You can’t put a price tag on safety,” said Locke

Questions Districts Should Ask When Creating a Multi-Layered Safety Approach

When asked what Locke would recommend to other districts looking to increase their safety and security, she shared that districts should review all of their current safety tools and practices and ask themselves the following:

- Do we have a layered approach to safety?
 - If so, are there gaps in the layered approach?
 - If not, how can we begin to build a layered safety approach?
- Are the layers organized to build upon each other?
- Can our tools and practices handle all types of incidents from the every day to the most extreme?
- Do our staff members feel protected by our current procedures? If not, what changes can we make to reassure them?

Today, more states are introducing and passing legislation, such as Alyssa’s Law, which requires public and charter schools to have silent panic buttons. In some states, additional legislation has passed recently requiring schools to have digital maps of school campuses for law enforcement to access in case of emergencies.

As more districts look at different solutions to adhere to these new laws and investments, leaders should keep in mind these critical components of K12 incident response solutions:

- Easy to use, especially under duress
- Does not rely on Wi-Fi or cellular connectivity
- Immediate notification to administrators and direct notification to 911 dispatch
- Mapping that provides room- and floor-level location accuracy
- Total campus coverage, including outdoors
- Simple to use, simple to train on, and simple to maintain

When safety is a priority for school districts, students and staff members feel safe coming to school and work, freeing them to focus more on instruction and less on what-ifs.



For more information on school safety technology solutions, visit our CENTEGIX Safety Platform page at centegix.com/safety-platform.

Learn more today. Because every second matters.

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“For our staff, it has been mindblowing [with the badge and the safety network having access to CENTEGIX technology], they now feel valued. We now have 2,000 additional eyes and ears on the safety of not only Yakima School District, but also the community as a whole and I can tell you what a difference that has made when we talk about a comprehensive culture of safety,” said Locke



SEE WHAT TEACHERS IN YAKIMA ARE SAYING

A student in another classroom with behavior issues grabbed his backpack and left class. There was a substitute in the class. I happened to be in the hallway and saw the student headed for the door. I followed him hoping he would head for the office but he proceeded into the parking lot and towards the street. I did not have my cellphone with me it was great to be able to push the button 3 times for admin support which came right away.

– Kimberly

I had a student that was being explosive and I needed help without leaving the area the student was in. CrisisAlert Badge was like having someone there immediately. I have never received help with a student so quickly!

– Darlene

The class was transitioning to lunch. One student was struggling to transition. He was escalated and getting upset.

I pushed the button 3 times to alert the office I needed support. The assistant principal was to the situation within a minute.

– Kendall

A student was leaving the classroom and running towards the road. I was able to push my button and receive assistance within moments. I’m grateful because I didn’t have a walkie accessible at the moment.

– Joe