

## Rural N.C. K-5 could be secure school of the future

*Pilot program, supported by top industry players, under way*

by: [Amy Canfield](#)

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WALLACE, N.C.—A now highly secure rural elementary school here is piloting a program that it hopes will become a model for other schools not only within its district but across the country.

The layered security at Wallace Elementary, a K-5 school with 725 students in Duplin County, includes a video intercom system at the locked front doors that are additionally protected with security screens that cannot be ripped or penetrated.

Visitors are buzzed in remotely. Once into the secure lobby, they must present government-issued ID to the receptionist. The IDs are then scanned through the visitor management system against a number of databases, including those for sex offenders and restraining orders against parents. Only once being cleared are visitors given temporary badges and allowed access to classrooms.

Surveillance cameras in hallways and other common areas and outside, panic buttons that alert directly to 911, automatic locks on classroom doors and other security measures have been added, too. Shrubbbery on school grounds was cut back, and new signage was added.

The pilot project, with equipment and systems contributed by a number of major players in the physical security industry, came about immediately after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Newtown, Conn.

"Prior to that time, middle school and high school were our concern," said Chuck Farris, chairman of the Duplin County, N.C., Schools Board of Education. Those schools already had armed school resource officers and a "very good relationship" with local law enforcement, he said.

"Historically elementary schools were off limits. [Newtown] blew that bubble up on that day. We shook in our boots. We're fighting a different battle now," he told *Security Director News*.

The local sheriff's department recommended that Farris contact Patrick Fiel, a nationally recognized school security expert and founder of PVF Security Consulting, who lives locally. Fiel is the former executive director of security for Washington, D.C., Public Schools, and also worked for Tyco/ADT.

He did a "walk-around" at the elementary school, which took a couple of

hours. "A lot of things I saw was good stuff, but there were some areas of vulnerability," he told *Security Director News*.

He also factored into his risk assessment that the surrounding community was growing. There's a small airport near the school, as well as a new Super Wal-Mart and a couple of new pharmacies. Fiel also conducted risk assessments at the district's 15 other campuses.

Within weeks, he had spoken with the superintendent and executive team about his findings and briefed the school board.

"They were immediately addressing these issues," Fiel said. "I had leadership buy-in," he said, and that's what made things happen so quickly.

He recommended a pilot project at Wallace Elementary, at no cost. His plan was approved.

So, with numerous contacts in the industry, Fiel reached out for contributions for the project. Those responding were: Tyco Integrated Security [integration services]; Aiphone [video intercom]; Harmony Security Products [security screens]; SISCO Identification Solutions [visitor management system]; Axis Communications [cameras]; ASSA ABLOY Group brands and Corbin Russwin [door locks], Securitron [power supplies], HES [strikes] and Rockwood [latch guard].

Ferrior said the school will showcase the pilot program in the near future. The school board will evaluate it, and parents and staff will also be asked to weigh in.

"Then we'll need to figure out from a financial standpoint what we can do immediately [at the district's other schools] and then have a longer range plan," he said.

"It might take four or five years," Fiel said, noting that he was responsible for 150 schools in the D.C. area. "But this is a start. It's a continuation process, and it's all about leadership mentalities and being proactive."

**TAGS:**

WALLACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DUPLIN COUNTY, N.C., CHUCK FARRIOR, PATRICK FIEL, TYCO INTEGRATED SECURITY, AIPHONE, HARMONY SECURITY PRODUCTS, SISCO IDENTIFICATION SOLUTIONS, AXIS COMMUNICATIONS, ASSA ABLOY, CORBIN RUSSWIN, SECURITRON, HES, ROCKWOOD, SCHOOL SECURITY, NEWTOWN, SECURITY DIRECTOR NEWS