



The Kids Are Back, But Are They Secure?

Among ALOA members is a wealth of knowledge to be shared with schools, law enforcement officials and institutions.

By John Truempy, CRL, CMIL

“THE KIDS ARE BACK.” THIS IS AN EXPRESSION I HEAR EVERY DAY THIS TIME of year, as do many of our members who work in schools, colleges and universities. It may be said like it’s a good thing —or spoken in a tone of dread because it means everyone’s about to get busy. Or it could mean the end of summer overtime for maintenance or dorm turnaround.

In my world of universities, it is the time of year when construction projects are coming to an end and everyone wants cores and keys installed on all the projects all at once. I begin to ask my supervisors, “What rush job do you want me to rush first?” My first thought was

to write this article about going to do a job and finding out the contractor had installed the wrong type of lock or some other kind of problem.

However as I started to collect some photos from jobs I have worked on with interesting contractor installs, I noticed on the news a story of another active shooter in a school. Thankfully a level-headed bookkeeper was able to talk the gunman out of killing and into giving himself up. Though this story ended much better than most that make the news, I can’t help but wonder — how did another shooter get into a school? Could he have made it into a classroom? What kind of physical security did this school have in place?

Keeping our Kids Safe

I am living in the real world where we cannot physically keep bad people locked out of all situations. We also don’t want children going to school in prison-like environments. At the same time, I believe the proper use of hardware and security technology could slow or discourage an active shooter. While the main problem has to be solved by social workers, psychologists and law enforcement, we as security professionals can do our part.

I have talked to people all over the country from many different fields: school officials, school security experts and fire officials. Some ideas make me wonder — like the thought of putting a magnet over a strike plate that a teacher can just pull out to lock a door. This worries me because fire doors are supposed to latch; are we going to trade one tragedy for another?

I read a story about a school that installed deadbolts with no key override in all doors. There are many reasons that may not be a good idea. On the other hand I have heard that many fire officials (I even encountered one myself) who would not allow classroom security function locks to be used — or even had them removed after installation because they thought people could be locked inside a room. The reason for these occurrences is simple: These people just don't understand hardware.

I have also talked to many institutional locksmiths about what they are doing at their facilities and have seen some creative ideas. Like the city school board locksmith who is using a different finish for cores on the inside cylinder of all the classroom security function locks. They are also using that finish on cores on all the other common keyed locks in each building, like teacher lounges and staff restrooms. In doing so, teachers know by sight they have a key that will lock the door. This is a well-thought-out plan from someone who understands hardware and how schools work.

Joining the Conversation

Within the AIL we have a huge brain trust of knowledge about hardware and how security works. We may even be able to borrow ideas from other segments of the institutional industry, such as banking and

gaming. I would like to form a task force to compile ideas on how to improve security in all types of educational facilities. These ideas will then be made available to the institutions through an electronic publication distributed by AIL.

If you would like to work with this task force, please contact me. Even if you just have some ideas to share without joining the task force, please feel free to send them to me. I can be reached at truempy@gmail.com. Please include "AIL Task Force" in the subject line. ☞



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