

# How secure is your campus?

According to industry experts, security and safety are among the top reasons that parents send their children to private schools. When parents choose a school, they entrust the lives and futures of their children to that school. Private schools have a responsibility to provide the safe and secure environment that their students, parents, staff and visitors expect.

When faced with ever increasing threats of gun violence, traffic hazards, natural disasters and terrorist attacks, the first inclination might be to raise the barricades and batten down the hatches. But few parents want to send their kids to a facility that feels more like a prison than a school. Thus, school officials carry the burden of defusing a daily onslaught of threats while avoiding alarm or panic.

So, how can you achieve that balance? How do you provide the best security and safety for each child without disturbing the positive learning environment that you work so hard to maintain? How do you fortify your campus without diminishing the hospitality and dignity of your institution? When faced with budget constraints, how can you make educated decisions about the necessity, means of implementation, or alternatives of each new security option?

How do other schools do it? Start by answering one question.

## ***How well do you know your school?***

### **Assess your strengths and weaknesses**



To ascertain your current level of security, a complete campus evaluation is essential. This audit should assess the facility exterior and interior features, perimeter protection, procedures, tools, staffing, and training.

Creating an inventory of vulnerabilities is an important first step. But a useful assessment requires evaluation, ranking, and weighing of all vulnerabilities. Every campus and building has some security weaknesses. However, a professional evaluation of their significance is needed before you can formulate a reasonable plan of action. Though many schools have security guards and a director of operations, most do not have true security professionals on staff.

***To be credible and useful, your security assessment should be executed according to professional guidelines.***

### **Engage a professional team**

Although good security is fairly self evident, bad security is not. There is a growing body of professional literature and standards, revolving around personal and property security in schools, of which, the general school community is unaware. A trained SRO (School Resource Officer) will use accepted industry standards of appraisal, and will not be biased by incentives to sell equipment or gadgets. Dedicated security pros participate in regular industry training and have received accreditations in their field.

***But, knowing "security" is not enough.***

### **Require independent school expertise**

A law enforcement practitioner without knowledge of private school communities may recommend increased security measures, like metal detectors and backpack "checks". But private school leaders know that many of the typical public school practices are neither acceptable to tuition-paying parents nor practical to implement.

Since the physical characteristics of the campus can often create security vulnerabilities, your security audit team should possess practical facilities knowledge so that proposed solutions meet building codes and minimize impact on facility operations.

The resulting audit report should reflect understanding of a private school audience: trustees, business officers, parents, and professional staff. The report is a direct response to requests from parents or school leadership for a review of security. It can even be a budgeting tool or a vital part of the school's overall risk management program. The report can also prove due diligence for your liability insurance carrier, supporting the school's efforts to minimize exposure, preserve insurance coverage and reduce premiums.

***The Building Solutions approach is thorough, professional, and independent school-sensitive.***

# The Building Solutions Approach

When an independent school decides to review their security situation, Building Solutions is ready and willing to provide one of the most thorough and individually-tailored security audits available to private schools today. A Building Solutions security audit begins with multiple physical surveys, during and after hours. The survey process conforms to CPTED<sup>1</sup> guidelines. Assessments include:

1. Observations of recurring processes such as carpool and student movement on campus.
2. Interviews of school community members including: staff, students, parents, and security personnel.
3. Review of policies, emergency response procedures, and tools available to first-responders.
4. Discussions with law enforcement and first-responder officials.

The Building Solutions security audit report includes a concise list of critical observations and recommendations for improvement. Each vulnerability is assigned a priority and given a budgeting classification (such as capital, operating, procedure only, or personnel). Conclusions are supported by photography, maps, diagrams, and interview notes. A diligent effort to identify vulnerabilities, the report assures all concerned parties that the school has explored every reasonable area for improvement.

The team includes a trained and certified School Resource Officer<sup>2</sup> with private school security experience, along with a facilities specialist experienced in working alongside independent school staff and decision-makers.

The Building Solutions' team will offer advice on "best practices" from its experience with similar schools in the area. Since our team serves only private schools, our recommendations are practical and consistent with a private school operating environment.

For more information, contact Building Solutions at **(214) 221-9145** or email us at [info@buildingsolns.com](mailto:info@buildingsolns.com).

## The Building Solutions Team

In 1990, Bill Keslar founded Building Solutions. Bill Keslar and his team pioneered the practice of facility audits in Texas and the Southwestern states. Today, Building Solutions is the area's leading provider of professional services to the facility departments of independent schools. Building Solutions has developed and upgraded campus facilities, trained maintenance personnel, and designed property maintenance programs for dozens of independent schools. They are the technical resource on facility management for School Office Services, and a key member of its Risk Management Team. The owners of Building Solutions have served as members on facility committees and boards of trustees for independent schools and as speakers at NAIS, ISAS, ISACS, ACSI, and SAES conferences.



Building Solutions has teamed up with Ralph Price, Director of Security at Greenhill School in Dallas, to provide a practical yet thorough security resource for independent schools. Ralph has been in law enforcement for 24 years and is an active-reserve officer for the Town of Addison as its accredited School Resource Officer. He is certified by the Leadership Program for School Resource Officers and is licensed by the State of Texas as a security company owner-operator. Ralph has been managing the security of one of Texas's most well known independent schools since 2000. His wide exposure to schools, experience in law enforcement, and ongoing partnership with Building Solutions as a security consultant, all distinguish Ralph as an excellent source of "best practices" for independent schools.

The Building Solutions Security Audit team brings with it a true understanding of the independent school environment, an understanding that only comes from interacting with independent schools on multiple levels: as parents, teachers, trustees, facility managers, security directors, and outside consultants.

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1 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design program, a nationally-recognized standard of security for schools and public buildings sponsored by the International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association ([www.cpted.net](http://www.cpted.net))

2 Designation offered by NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers) ([www.NASRO.org](http://www.NASRO.org)), to 9,000 trained law enforcement personnel and those concerned with maintaining security in school environments

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