



## Protecting schools, and those inside.

Advancing a Connecticut school district's security with Symmetry™

Classroom doors, left open to the playground or sidewalk to catch breezes on sunny autumn afternoons. Fire doors, propped open with books to make trips between portable classrooms and main buildings more convenient. Main entrance doors, unmonitored and unmanned, in many cases allowing anyone to walk in at any time. And no existing centralized database of up-to-date access credentials/records for employees and contractors.

In Connecticut school districts in 2011, this was not unusual. Then came 2012, and the tragic Newtown Elementary shootings. They completely changed security reality for school districts across America, with Connecticut school districts feeling the intense pressure – including the large district featured here, which needed to upgrade its security and do it quickly.

After extensive consultation and internal discussion, the district hired Advanced Security Technologies (AST) – a Connecticut-based full-service technology integration and consulting firm – to handle a project that was essentially starting a security program from scratch.

### **2,000 people, one badge maker**

Even though the district manages an average of 1600 full-time employees and 400 contract employees, the district's primary credentialing procedure consisted of piles of paper and one employee making ID badges.

The district did not have a database of access credentials and no centralized system for managing personnel changes. There was also no way to centrally

**CUSTOMER:** Large Connecticut School District

**INTEGRATOR:** Advanced Security Technologies (AST)

**INSTALLATIONS:**

312 Card Readers in 18 Educational Buildings

- 3 High Schools
- 3 Middle Schools
- 11 Elementary Schools
- 1 Early Childhood Center

**SOLUTIONS:**

**Symmetry™ Security Management System** – Founded on our powerful, unified and open platform, Symmetry provides a full solution suite including access control, video, identity management, visitor management, mobile, analytics, and audio.

As the backbone of your security system, Symmetry delivers an all-encompassing view of your security program. Proactively respond to threats, lock down doors or buildings, and implement pre-determined workflows: with Symmetry you're always prepared to make the right decisions and respond quickly.

**EN-1DBC + Edge Network Controller** – AMAG's intelligent Edge Network controller offers PoE and support for one card reader, and can be upgraded to support two card readers. It supports a full range of reading technologies including Smart Card, Proximity, Magnetic Stripe, and Biometrics.

*Continued on next page*



control access after hours or when the buildings were closed for weekends, holidays, and vacations. Several of the schools had mantraps at their main entrances, and two schools used card entry systems (only one of which was in use), but that was about all.

Physical facilities were also a challenge. Some of the older schools have no central air conditioning; as a result, many doors were left open for ventilation, or doors that were supposed to stay closed were propped open with books. This was hardly an optimal way to protect the people inside from outside threats.

The team had a lot of work to do.

### **People management a pain point**

According to the district's Security Manager, while security was by far the primary concern, it wasn't the only concern. As installation began, he quickly discovered that "people management" was a major pain point. So it was highly important that the access-control system wasn't too cumbersome to manage, or to use. Otherwise, people would circumvent it.

### **Security made simple – and cost-efficient**

AST co-founder and Director of Engineering Tom Marino specified Symmetry Access Control software and AMAG's EN-1DBC and EN-2DBC door controllers as the backbone of the new system.

"From a technology standpoint, AMAG did several things that set it apart from the competition," he said. "One of

### **EN-2DBC + Edge Network Controller – AMAG's**

Intelligent Edge Network controller with PoE and support for two card readers. It offers distributed intelligence and, along with other features, allows for direct network discovery and multiple-facility administration when used with PCs running AMAG's Symmetry software.

them was the ability to integrate with third-party systems ... for example, to integrate with existing intrusion alarm systems for the purpose of door status monitoring. Our customer knew they were getting a system that would future-proof their investment."

"AMAG also offered a very cost-efficient design, which made it affordable and scalable. Using the EN-1DBC Door Controllers or EN-2DBC Door Controllers, we were able to give them an accurate per-door price estimate so they could plan their budget. All our customer really needed to do was run a data cable from an IT closet to a door control panel mounted above the door, using PoE from the network switch for power. We were also able to power the electric strike; all right there

*"It's the same system that was installed at a large government site. So I felt like my customer was going to be in good shape .... future-proofed for anything he may need."*

*– Tom Marino, Co Founder and Chief Engineer, Advanced Security Technologies*



without the need to run a whole bundle of composite cables all the way back to a data closet. That kind of topology was unique to AMAG at the time ... having a single door PoE power controller that could also power an electric locking mechanism.”

In addition, an emergency lockdown button was installed in each main office to disable access to readers for everyone except first responders.

### The same system used by the government

Marino said another reason for choosing Symmetry was its robustness and integration capabilities. “The same system was installed at large government facilities and used by all branches of the US military. I felt like my customer was definitely going to be in good hands with AMAG. If Symmetry did not already have a desired capability or integration in their current feature set, AMAG’s custom solutions team has the ability to develop one.”

“The final component was the Symmetry software. In terms of a simple-to-navigate but very capable user interface, I thought it was better than most other access control systems I’ve worked with.”

### Securing today, and tomorrow

The schools now have 240 card readers, with 72 more multiclass readers being installed. The district’s IT rooms

are also adding card readers with secure locks that can trace and limit who enters. The Symmetry system can be controlled, managed, and updated remotely; the security center is also capable of remotely setting and managing building lockdowns in case of emergency. Finally, a database of current full- and part-time employees allows the security team to manage access credentials on the fly.

### Future integration possibilities

For the future, Marino said the district and AST are discussing a plan to integrate the schools’ video management and burglary alarm systems, which Symmetry’s open architecture can easily accommodate. There’s also a conversation about adding door status monitors for those exterior classroom doors as budget becomes available.

It’s a radically different world for school security now. But together, AST and this school district are navigating it with simple, yet sophisticated, solutions that work.

*“The Symmetry software ... was better than other access control systems I’ve worked with. It did a very good job of having a simple but very capable user interface.”*

*– Tom Marino, Co Founder and Chief Engineer, Advanced Security Technologies*

## Challenge

Access control and security for 18 buildings with constantly-changing personnel rosters

## Solution

Symmetry Access Control  
EN-1DBC and EN-2DBC Door Controllers with Edge Network Controllers

## Results

School and educational buildings can now control access on-site and remotely, and lockdown access in case of emergency.