

Supporting Safer Schools

Sprint provides communications technology to help make schools more secure.

Schools have already incorporated communications technology to improve the educational process, extend the reach of the classroom, increase parental involvement and promote educational equity.

Now Sprint is using that same technology to make schools safer by helping school officials watch for and deter violence, share information to improve school safety — even how to find out about and stop plans for violent events before they occur.

Detering Violence

Teachers can't be everywhere, all the time. That means some areas of the school go unwatched while teachers are teaching.

Sprint is helping school officials monitor hallways, cafeterias and commons areas — even when classes are in session.

The solution: Sprint TekNet IPSM, Sprint's high-tech administrative assistant that automates schools' administrative functions, from clocks and bells to VCRs and video cameras.

With Sprint TekNet IP, Sprint is helping schools install low-cost video surveillance systems so administrators can watch for threatening activity.

"Video surveillance not only helps you monitor the school for potential violence," Sprint Education Market Manager Mark Uhart says, "but because the students know they're being watched, it's also a great deterrent. It's no different than video cameras in department, grocery or convenience stores. Just like in parenting, proper supervision is essential. A video surveillance system merely extends the capability to supervise and monitor the student body. The degree of supervision should be consistent with the degree of risk. For example, in the elementary school environment, video surveillance may not be necessary because students remain with one or two teachers throughout the day."

Sprint TekNet IP video surveillance takes a JPEG image every five to 10 seconds, then stores it on a time-lapse drive, holding it for up to several days. With one encoder, up to 16 cameras (or more with additional multiplexors) can record images simultaneously. With the proper camera, it can even pan, tilt and zoom. This can be ideal for large areas or the property outside the building.

With Sprint TekNet IP, district leadership and law enforcement can monitor what's going on in each school via the Internet by clicking through screens of images. The system is password protected so administrators can control who has access. That's an inexpensive alternative to hiring additional staff.

Sharing Safety Information

In more than three out of four cases of school violence, the attackers told others about their plans before the event, according to a report by the United States Secret Service (USSS). The preliminary finding and implications found in the *USSS Safe School Initiative: An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools* can be found at www.treas.gov/usss/index.htm. Now Sprint can help schools encourage those confidants to come forward with information before the offender acts, thanks to ParentLink.

ParentLink is a parental involvement system using interactive voice response technology ("Press 990 for information on our safe schools initiative). With ParentLink, Sprint can help schools set up a School Safety Hotline, a voice mailbox where students or parents can anonymously report safety concerns or behavior that could lead to serious incident. At the completion of the call, ParentLink immediately pages the school resource officer or other designated leadership, alerting them that there's a school safety hotline message to be retrieved.

ParentLink also:

- Allows parents and students to call in for the latest information about school safety and violence prevention.
- Makes it easy for administrators to conduct phone surveys to better understand parental concerns and perceptions regarding school safety.
- Alerts all parents, through outbound dialing, about incidents involving school safety. Parents expect to be notified immediately when safety concerns crop up. ParentLink can provide parents with this information quickly and reliably. A brief message can be delivered with more information provided on an information box. Parents simply dial into the ParentLink system or access the information box over the Internet.

"School districts have found that some parents get upset when they learn about school incidents from the media, another parent or even their own children. The best way to build confidence in the school leadership is to communicate quickly and accurately," Uhart says. "Although most districts handle parental communication on a case-by-case basis some don't have a formal policy in place for serious incidents. Parents need to know what to expect."

Making Schools Safer

“Technology can be an important tool for making schools safer,” Uhart says.

“At Sprint, we want to help teachers and administrators identify problems before they occur, deter violence and work hand-in-hand with parents and students to make schools even safer.”