

# case study



## Keeping Rural Schools Safe – How One PA District Uses Technology to Make School Staff More Effective at Security

Most people assume the further away a small town is from a major city, the safer that town's school district must be. Penns Valley Area School District Superintendent Brian Griffith is not one of those people. Griffith led efforts to install a custom security system that gives district staff and teachers the power to control technologies that will protect students if an active shooter is on school grounds.

**Honeywell**



## The Situation:

“The school district’s approach to improving its security infrastructure was exceptional,” said Ken Darr, Vice President at LowV Systems, the local integrator that designed and implemented the system. “This installation is a great example to other schools of how to select security systems that effectively work together across several locations.”

Penns Valley sits in rural Spring Mills, Penn. about 30 miles northeast of State College and Penn State University. The district faced unique challenges in part because of its physical location but also because there is no police force on campus or in Spring Mills. The four schools in the district fall under Pennsylvania State Police jurisdiction and the closest police station is between 15-30 minutes away.

The superintendent’s office and LowV Systems enlisted feedback from law enforcement and safety associations on system capabilities that would mitigate

these challenges and assist police responding in an emergency situation. Using this insight, LowV developed a custom solution that is easy to operate and lets administrators communicate seamlessly with one another across all four schools. If a security-related event were to unfold at one location, staff at all other schools are automatically notified and a district-wide lockdown is activated instantly.

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**“The district’s security system helps staff take control to protect students if an event were to occur.”**

*Ken Darr  
Vice President at LowV Systems*

“In an emergency situation, staff and administrators will have more transparency than ever before into what is taking place in and around school buildings.”

## The Solution:

**Designing Security With a Clear Purpose**

The goal of any security upgrade should be more than simply installing

new, high-tech physical equipment—the system must be designed to provide personnel more meaningful information to help them make decisions, and allow them to be more effective during an incident. That philosophy perfectly describes the overarching objective of Penns Valley’s new system.

LowV Systems, for example, expanded the district’s video surveillance capabilities by adding Honeywell IP cameras to parking lots and athletic fields and mounted cameras around each external structure.

“Now, administrators can more easily monitor the areas outside surrounding schools,” Darr said.

Cameras were also installed in cafeterias and gymnasiums, throughout hallways and in corners, around foyers and at all entry points. In total, Penns Valley added over 200 new cameras to five buildings. “In my experience, it is an unprecedented number of cameras for a school district this size,” said Darr. “However, integrated video surveillance

is one of the most important features of this system because it provides the district and police officials with the ability to view live events throughout a security incident.”

The IP cameras were integrated with several existing analog cameras and all video streams were connected using MAXPRO® VMS, a Honeywell video management system. LowV then began installation of an access control system. Access control helps to monitor and limit traffic into schools by requiring keycard authorization at entry points. The video surveillance system also plays a role here—each time a card is swiped at a keypad, a camera that monitors the doorway is triggered to begin recording activity at the entry point.

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**“We put the power of building access in the hands of school administrators by providing a quick and easy way for staff in the central office to verify the identity of any person who walks through school doors.”**

*Brian Griffith  
Penns Valley Area School District  
Superintendent*

The system also gives school staff more control in who can access the buildings. Visitors to the school, including students’ parents, are escorted to the school’s main office where Honeywell’s LobbyWorks Visitor Management System requires them to present ID at an office kiosk. LobbyWorks updates the Pro-Watch database with each visitor’s personal information so there is record of each person’s visit. Then, if and when access is granted, a badge is issued that visitors must scan at each entryway keypad for entry into the building.

The LobbyWorks system and all intrusion, video and access control systems are integrated and managed using Pro-Watch, a system management suite that acts as a common user interface between the four schools. Authorized school staff and district officials can log-in to the Pro-Watch portal to monitor live camera feeds, evaluate access data at entryways and search stored surveillance footage to review past events.

Administrators can also log in to Pro-Watch remotely from any place, at any time. This is helpful to monitor

system health—for example, if an intrusion system goes offline, a camera malfunctions or a door is forced open, system administrators receive notification via email or text message. They can then log-in to the system from a mobile device to make an informed decision on whether to alert authorities and LowV Systems to address a problem.

Finally, PA State Police recommended the district install mantraps at main entryways that are designed to lock intruders between external doorways and a second set of doors that let a person inside. If someone attempts to force entry after getting through the first set of doors, the trap falls and locks the person inside a bulletproof enclosure. Detaining an intruder during a lockdown situation is crucial to ensuring students remain safe until authorities arrive.

“LowV Systems recommended adding new, advanced technologies to improve the limited security system we already had,” said Griffith. “In my mind, one of the standout features of the system build-out is the mantraps.”



## The Benefits:

### Complimenting Future Growth with Scalable Technology

Down the line, Penns Valley can easily add to its security infrastructure without disrupting how the systems interact with each other.

“The main benefit of this system is its ability to empower our staff with technology that helps protect students if an intruder is on campus,” said Griffith. “But we also chose these advanced technologies because as our district expands, our security systems are easily scalable to that growth.”

There has never been a major security incident at a Penns Valley Area school but the district has already used its new system to solve problems. The video surveillance system recently helped administrators identify a vandal plaguing the school parking lots, and it also captured evidence of a former staff member stealing money.

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**“Families are resting easier because they know we have done everything we can to ensure students are safe at school.”**

*Brian Griffith*

*Penns Valley Area School District Superintendent*

“While the technology plays a major role in our security procedures, so does preparation. Even in this enhanced environment, we continue to rigorously train staff and students on the protocols associated with an intruder on campus.”

## The Products:

- Honeywell IP Cameras
- MAXPRO® VMS
- Pro-Watch
- LobbyWorks Visitor Management System



### For more information:

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