

Detroit Public Schools News Article

New visitor badge system in DPS high schools, career technical centers aims to make school buildings safer

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Visitors to Detroit Public Schools high schools, career technical schools and the district's new Police Command Center will soon be put through on-the-spot background checks as part of a new security clearance system aimed at making campuses safer for students and staff.

The system, which is being rolled out gradually to 33 sites, will instantly scan visitors' driver licenses and state ID cards and cross-check the information with sex-offender registries throughout the United States and Canada. School security personnel can also conduct checks using visitors' names and date of birth. It will eventually be set up at every DPS school.

"With about 42,500 sex offenders in Michigan, many of them in this region, the ability to instantly identify and remove them from our school buildings will create safer learning environments for our students," said DPS Inspector General Wilbert Van Marsh. "This is an effective system, used in dozens of school districts, hospitals, government and law enforcement agencies around the country, and we expect it will make a difference in our schools."

Individuals who are identified as sex offenders will be denied entry to school buildings, and visitors who pass the background checks will be issued temporary photo ID badges. The badges print in about 15 seconds and indicate which area of the school they may enter. The system will not check additional criminal databases, so it will not indicate whether individuals have outstanding warrants or other legal issues.

The system today identified a registered sex offender who was trying to enter Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School. The individual left without incident after being informed that he could not enter the school building.

The ID badges will identify wearers as visitors or contractors. Young children who accompany adults to schools will be issued visitor badges that will feature the adult's name and picture, protecting the child's identity.

Each badge will expire after one day, though for efficiency, contractors, regular volunteers and other frequent visitors can be issued badges for long-term use. The system also allows DPS to create its own database of people who are barred from entering school buildings.

"This system will allow us to know exactly who is entering our schools buildings," said DPS Police Chief Roderick Grimes. "It offers us a high-tech way of keeping track of who is in our buildings, which is useful in cases of emergency."

The Fast-Pass visitor badge system cost \$131,000 and includes a camera, adhesive paper badge printer, driver license reader and bar-code scanner. Each school should have its system delivered by the end of next week, with training for school police and security staff ongoing until all schools are up and running.

All high school students have been issued new photo ID badges that are color-coded by school, allowing campus security personnel to instantly identify students who belong on their campus. The Fast-Pass Student badge system cost \$140,000 and includes a camera and PVC (plastic) card printer. The program replaces outdated student ID system and maintenance contracts, which were handled on a school-by-school basis.

The winning bidder to provide the student and visitor badge systems is Security Identification Solutions Company of West Palm Beach, Florida.

The district has also purchased a new ID badge system for employees called AMAG. The \$40,000 system was funded through the \$500.5 million Proposal S bond initiative Detroit voters approved in November 2009.