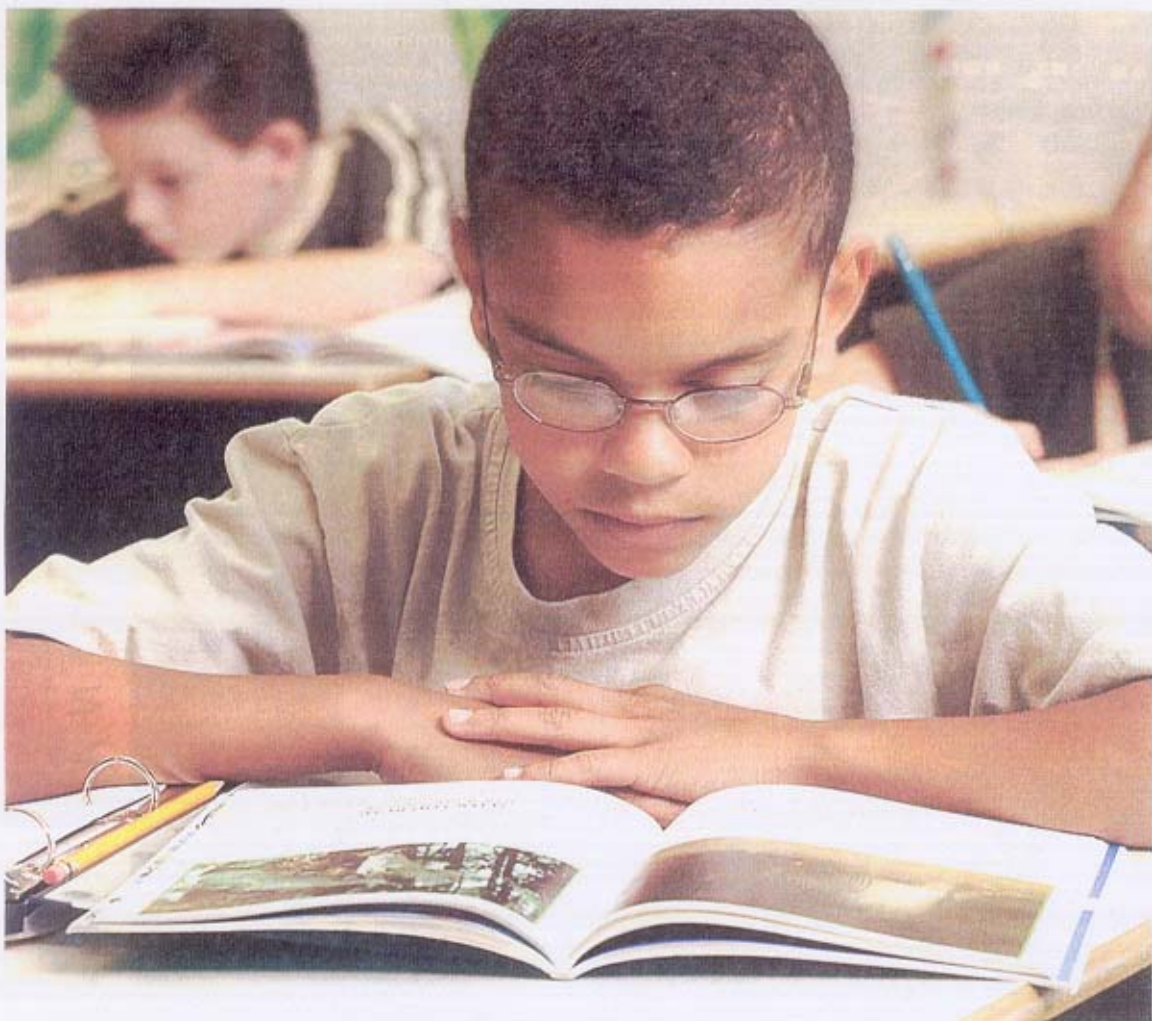


## Raising the Grade



### Schools adopt visitor management systems to help secure teachers, students and premises

By Catherine L. York

**T**he Jessica Lunsford Act—named for the nine-year old who was murdered by a construction worker at her school—sent school districts throughout Florida scrambling to implement fingerprinting and screening systems to comply with the law. Visitor management systems, usually an afterthought to employee access control systems, took front stage as

the preferred solution to screen would-be vendors, visitors and volunteers.

Over the past few years, electronic visitor management systems emerged as the replacement for handwritten log books, which have long been viewed as ineffective to track or verify visitors. These systems have matured from basic badging workstations to enterprise-wide, networked solutions that

allow users to register, badge, and track and manage visitors.

In light of the Jessica Lunsford Act, Florida schools districts were drawn to the flexibility of robust visitor management systems to meet their requirements. For example, Collier County Public Schools implemented the first systemwide, networked visitor management system in Florida. Though the school district had already begun fingerprinting all workers, vendors and regular volunteers in search of violent criminals, drug dealers and sexual predators, they still had to contend with the thousands of visitors and volunteers who had unfettered access to students.

Because it would be impractical and prohibitively expensive to fingerprint every visitor, Collier County deployed FastPass to

create security at the front door of the school.

The FastPass system first scans the visitor's ID and automatically populates the database with information from a U.S. or Canadian license, military ID or passport. The system recognizes immediately whether the ID is properly formatted or fake. The system then checks the name against a national sex offender registry and other internal watch list(s). If there is no match, FastPass takes the visitor's photo and prints a badge. Preset fields allow administrators to customize the badge to include time and date of entry, areas the visitor is permitted to access, badge expiration or any other relevant data. Administrators can quickly create reports, view the history of a group or single visitor. And since all systems are networked, a visitor may not move from building to building, hoping to gain access—the system will consistently check their identity, determine privileges and show visitation history.

Collier County is hoping that FastPass will act primarily as a frontline deterrent to identify convicted sex offenders by robbing them of their anonymity. Each time the system generates a hit, the administrators knows they've done their part in keeping their schools safe.

The system also acts as a district-wide messaging center. If an Amber alert is issued, for example, an administrator can push the alert out to each of the workstations. If the system is integrated with the employee access control system, each employee can receive the same alert by e-mail. Since mere seconds can make a difference when a child turns up missing, having a vehicle to push alerts out quickly is critical.

The same is true for emergencies. In the event of a hurricane, fire or school shooting, administrators can quickly alert employees of the impending event and quickly generate a report showing all visitors with photographs. This tool, along with the employee access control system, enables administrators to account for all building occupants and evacuate them from the property.

The robust nature of the system gives administrators the tools and flexibility to keep their schools safe. Once a step child to employee access control systems, visitor management systems have come into their own.

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