



Case study



Rural Nebraska Winnebago Public Schools Improves School Security Without Negatively Impacting Student Experience

Winnebago Public Schools

LOCATION: Winnebago, Nebraska

K-12 STUDENTS: 600

ENTRANCES: North and South (2)

WEBSITE: winnebagopublicschools.org

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Deliver frictionless screening experience without degrading security effectiveness
- Identify the location of the purported threat to avoid intrusive secondary checks
- Avoid security lines that pose a soft threat target and negatively impact student experience
- Facilitate more student-adult interactions at beginning of the school day
- Provide the school board with monthly analytics on school security screening

Solution

People

- Delivered on-site training, deployment, and ongoing support by the Evolv Solutions Engineering team

Process

- Deployed 2 single-lane Evolv Express systems
- Trained security operators and school staff on Evolv Express system operations and analytics
- Supported school safety team in providing options for ConOps to align with new security screening processes

Technology

- 2 Evolv Express® Single-lane Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI®
- Evolv Insights®
- Integration with Alibi Security surveillance cameras and Apptegy Thrillshare for various communications, including mass notifications

Outcomes



Screened over 17,000 students, visitors, staff, parents, and teachers in the first month



Fosters a culture of security for students



Detecting vapes and other illegal paraphernalia in secondary screening



Generated positive reviews from students, parents, teachers, staff, and school board members



Produce detailed analytics for daily review and monthly review with the school board



Rural Nebraska Public School Lays the Groundwork for Safety Preparedness

Adam James has served in various capacities for the Winnebago Public Schools over the past 19 years.

He started as the elementary school Principal and became the Activities Director 14 years ago. At the time, the Winnebago school district had basic extracurricular activities—football, basketball, and track. Today, under the direction of James, this list has grown significantly to include volleyball, wrestling, golf, cross country, esports, and drama.

Always up for a new challenge, James assumed further responsibility as Safety Director five years ago. When Winnebago made some administrative changes this year, he stepped back from his role as Principal and focused on his role as Safety Director. “When I became Safety Director, we sought to institute new security protocols and technologies

to take school security to the next level,” he recalls. “The biggest output was the development of a preparedness plan.”

Winnebago Public Schools is located on the Winnebago Reservation of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Winnebago has approximately 600 elementary, middle, and high school students, who attend school in the same building. “We have a unique situation as we have students of all ages arriving at the school,” James explains. “We have a north and south entrance. The South entrance is a drop-off point for parents and buses and opens at the beginning and end of the school day, whereas the North entrance is open throughout.”

Finding the Right Security Screening Technology

Earlier this year, James embarked on a search for additional technology to enhance screening at the school's two entrances, as a precaution given the rise in violence across the country.

"We had not experienced a problem with weapons. We had some small incidents but nothing that posed a threat. However, we saw an uptick in school violence and what was happening in the media and we wanted to get out in front of potential threats," he relays. "We had implemented a video surveillance system 3 years ago, and it has been a big success. But we felt that we needed something beyond video at our entrances."

James' initial search focused on leveraging monies from a grant. It was during this process that he ran across the Evolv Express® system. "We looked at multiple options," he says. "One was enhancements to our legacy video surveillance technology, and metal detectors were also on the table. Ultimately, the Express unit was the only technology that met our requirement to improve security without impacting student experience."

Working with Evolv Partner [ICU Technologies](#), Winnebago set up multiple video streaming sessions to evaluate the system. "With the Express unit, we could have free-flowing screening that enabled our students to feel secure but have a

positive experience at the same time," James notes. "Evolv has a great security screening solution for any school seeking to secure an entrance with the desire to improve security while maintaining a positive environment and culture," adds Jason Eatmon, Chief Experience Officer at ICU Technologies.

James was also impressed with the fact that the Express systems constantly learn and become more accurate in their detection effectiveness using Evolv Cortex AI. "Not only does this enable us to find new threats faster, but Evolv Cortex AI allows us to classify threats and to differentiate between a harmless object and one that is a risk," he explains.

With Evolv, schools can process students faster and seamlessly, effectively removing the long lines and soft target created by traditional magnetometers. "Evolv makes a lot of sense when a school wants to improve security but they don't want to impact culture," Eatmon adds. "The impact to operations is negligible while the impact to the human spirit and campus culture is immeasurable."

“ Being able to see student flows down to five-minute intervals, detection performance at both gates, when alerts occurred, and at what sensitivity setting the units were configured provides us with valuable information we can use.”

- Adam James, Safety and Events Director, Winnebago Public Schools



“Learning” the Evolv Express® System

As the grant from which James had found the Evolv Express system was competitive and the 2022-23 school year was quickly approaching, James and the Winnebago school board decided to allocate school funds to acquire two single-lane Express systems.

“We wanted to have the new system in place at the start of school,” he says.

An Evolv Solutions Engineer scheduled time for on-site training and deployment. “He came out and worked with us to ensure everything was stood up and running smoothly,” James says. The Solutions Engineer also trained the school’s Parent Safety Professionals who manage the two Express systems. “Our Parent Safety Professionals operate the two units, while our School Resource Officer and I oversee secondary security checks,” James explains. “The Evolv Solutions Engineer was very helpful and ensured that we know how to set up the system, manage it, as well as troubleshoot in the event we encounter any issues.”

The south entrance for Winnebago remains open throughout the school day, while the north entrance is open only for the beginning and end of the school day. “We go live at 7:30 a.m. and transition management at 8:30 a.m. over to a school secretary sitting near the south entrance,” James comments. “I remain the secondary check operator throughout the day. Beyond ensuring entrances are not cluttered with wires, the wireless capability enables me to take the second tablet with me. My office is upstairs, above the Express unit in the south entrance, I get alert notifications while I am working and can react in real-time.”

When James and other members of the Winnebago team set up the Express systems with the help of the Evolv Solutions Engineer, they put them through the paces to ensure they would effectively detect weapons. “Our School Resource Officer, who is also a Law Enforcement Officer, hid weapons in an assortment of places, and the Express unit detected it every time,” James remembers. “This helped confirm that we had made the right decision.”

Grants for Education K-12 School Security

Although Winnebago ended up using school funds to acquire the two Express systems, James recommends that other schools look to take advantage of grants. “We actually would have gone the route of a grant, but we wanted to have the Express systems in place on the first day of school,” he reflects. “But there are a number of grants out there that schools can tap to help defray the cost.”

There are currently three forms of federal funding available to schools for health and safety*:

- **ESSER:** Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
- **COPS:** Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
- **BJA:** Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance

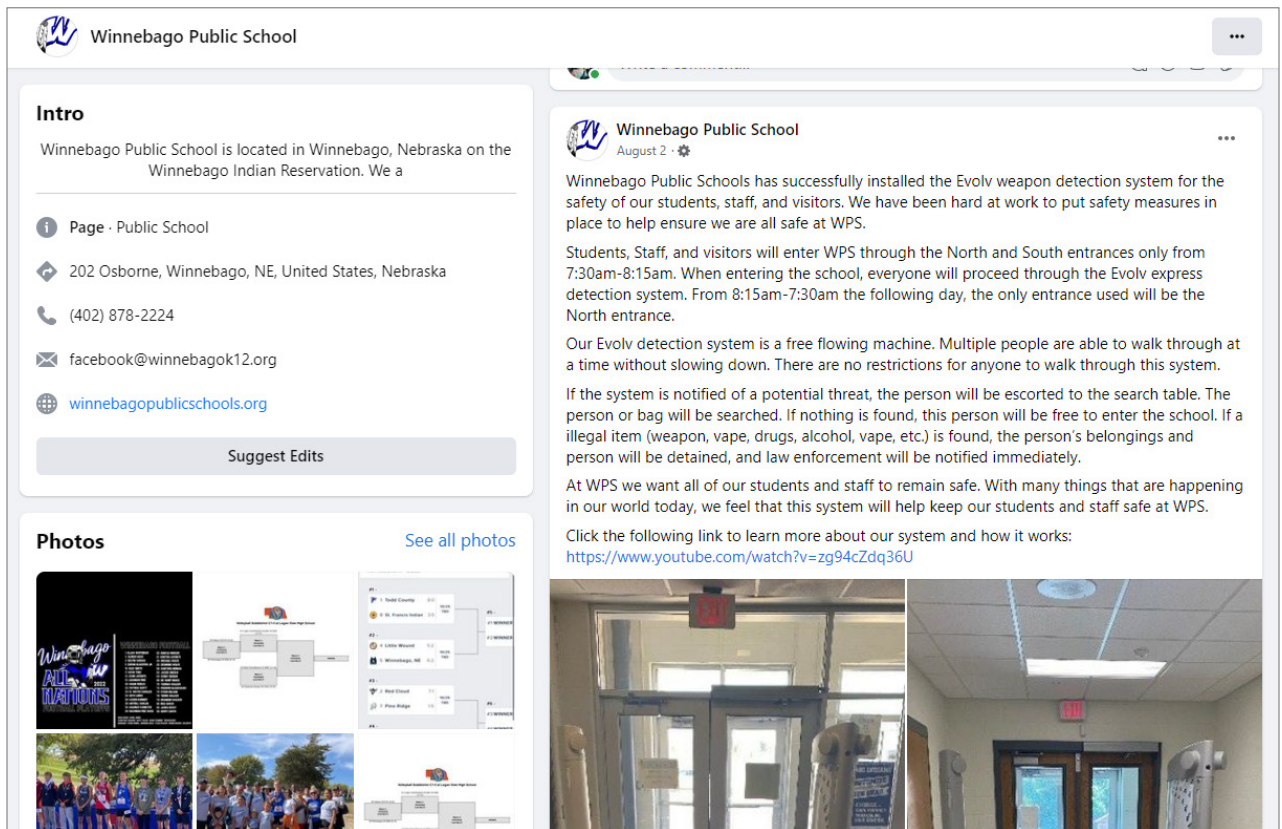
**This list was revised in October 2022*

Laying the Groundwork for a Successful Go-live Day

In preparation for the first day of school, James made sure the entire community knew a new security screening system and process was in place.

“Communication is really important when rolling out a new technology and process,” he relates. “I sent out notifications via our text system as well as Facebook and Twitter about our new safety protocols and the Express system itself. These

included photos and videos of the system. We also ran a notice and short article in the local newspaper. Everyone—students, parents, visitors, and others—were aware of the change.”



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Express Units Get Positive Reviews

Students have found the Express systems and detection capabilities intriguing.

“They see the red box on the Express tablet that pinpoints the location of the threat on their bodies or bags,” James relates. “They have told us they feel safer. We’re experiencing a low alert ratio and are doing secondary checks on a very small number of students and visitors a day. We could have students remove their Chromebooks from their bags, which would improve this ratio more, but we like where we’re at; the secondary searches give us an opportunity to check for vapes and other things.”

Detection of vapes and other illegal paraphernalia is an unexpected benefit for Winnebago. “Not only do the Express systems detect weapons, but they also enable us to find certain types of vapes,” James says. When the system alerts on a student, James and team use the opportunity secondary screening provides to check for other items prohibited on school grounds. “The secondary screening checks enable us to check for vapes and other illegal paraphernalia. While this was not one of our original goals with the deployment, it has been a positive outcome,” James relays “We have a real problem with vapes and other banned items in the school, and the deterrent factor is a big plus. Indeed, now that we have the Express systems in place, students are telling us, ‘Geez, we cannot get anything into the school anymore.’”

In addition to the above, the Express systems give James, the CROs, and parent safety operators a new opportunity to interact with students as they arrive at school each morning. “Some of the students who get stopped often for secondary checks, see the interaction as part of their daily routine,” James says. “It gives them a chance to have a positive conversation with an adult to start the day. This even happens for the students who don’t set off an alert.”

Likewise, parents have been very enthusiastic about the deployment of the Express systems. “We received a number of positive emails and social media posts,” James says. “They are quite pleased that Winnebago made this level of investment to keep their children safe. They also want to know if their kids are carrying vapes and other paraphernalia and trying to sneak them into the school.”



Leveraging Evolv Insights® Analytics

Understanding the power of analytics, James elected to leverage Evolv Insights analytics out of the gate.

“Being able to see student flows down to five-minute intervals, detection performance at both gates, when alerts occurred, and at what sensitivity setting the units were configured provides us with valuable information we can use,” he says. “I also include Insights analytics in my monthly reports to the school board. When I recently presented findings from the first month of deployment, they were quite surprised to hear that we screened over 17,000 students, visitors, parents, and staff. They never realized that we have that many people entering our school building.”

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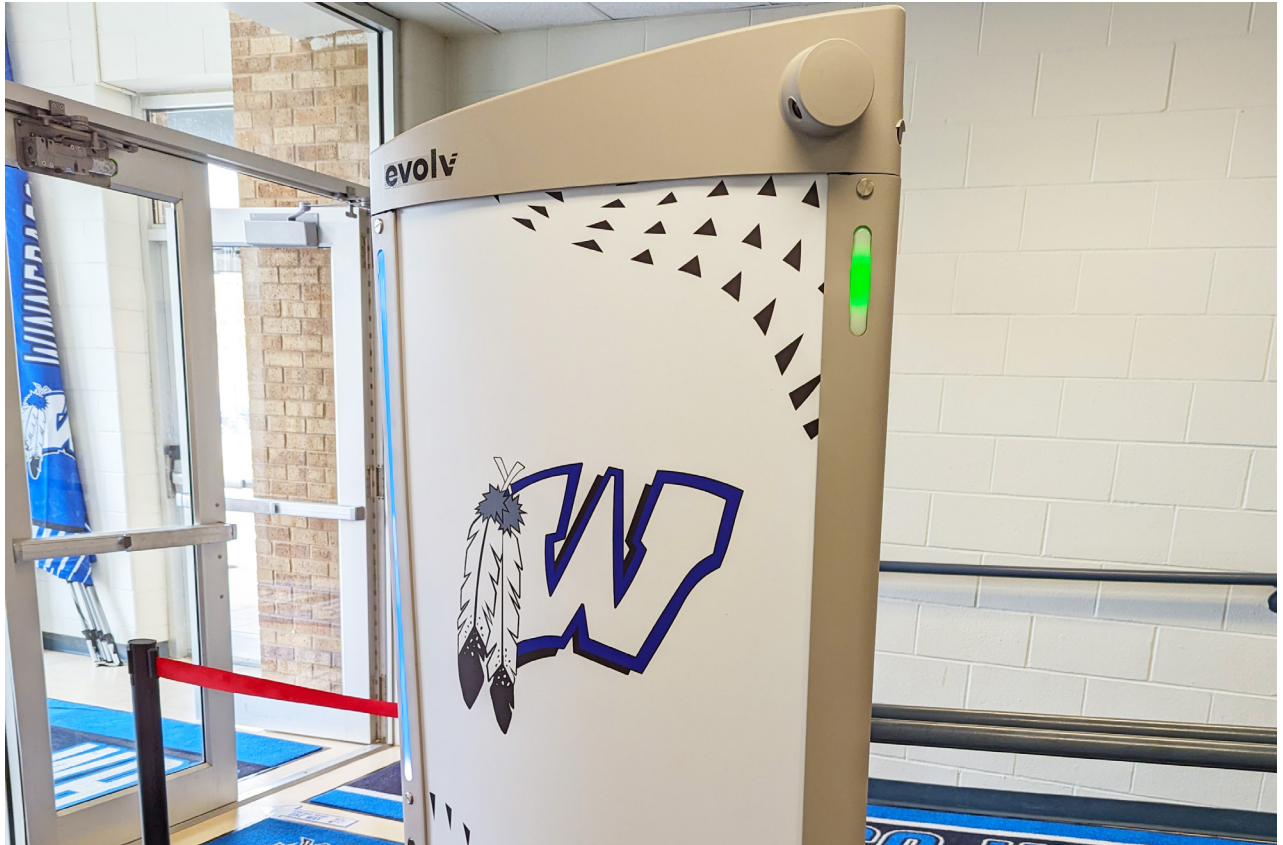
Integration on the Roadmap for A Better Security Ecosystem

Integration of the Express systems into the school's existing security investments is something James is excited about.

Winnebago has been using surveillance cameras for 13 years, and Evolv recently added an Open API that will enable the integration of these cameras with the Express system. The same Open API can be used to integrate Winnebago's online communication system, which they have had for three years, into the Express system. This communication system is used to manage online interactions between the school and parents, law enforcement, and the Winnebago community.

"We plan to activate these two integrations in the near future," James says. "We really like Evolv's long-term integration strategy. Rather than having siloes of different security technology that don't talk to each other, this Open API gives us the ability to consolidate them into one platform that shrinks our time to respond to an incident while enabling us to build better efficiencies."





Integrating Evolv into School Culture

As James looks to the future, he notes that being able to brand the Express towers with the Winnebago school colors and mascot helps create a seamless and unobtrusive ingress experience for students.

“This makes the Express units blend into our school environment even further,” he says. “Students already see the Express systems as part of the school and having them branded with Winnebago school colors and mascot makes this, even more, the case.”

While maintaining school culture and experience is critical, James is particularly pleased with the safety benefits of the Evolv deployment: “Our students, teachers, staff, and community safer. The Express system has been a great addition to our school and was certainly the right decision to make.”

“Evolv makes a lot of sense when a school wants to improve security but they don’t want to impact culture. The impact to operations is negligible while the impact to the human spirit and campus culture is immeasurable.”

- Adam James, Safety and Events Director, Winnebago Public Schools



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