



# 5 High-impact Strategies for School IT Leaders

How IT leaders in education are driving  
maximum impact with technology



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## Introduction

School leaders need to maximize the impact they can generate with the resources, time and people they have. Often, school leaders are constrained by limited budgets, small IT teams and a larger and growing bases of users.

Despite these challenges, many IT leaders in the education space are deploying high-impact strategies to ensure that they can create maximum impact and keep their schools safe and healthy.

This guide will provide 5 high-impact strategies for IT leaders to leverage as they work to keep schools safe and healthy. By looking at case studies and successful deployments of Verkada's integrated security system, this white paper identifies the trends and capabilities that leaders are using to drive change today.

In addition to looking at high-impact strategies, this white paper also highlights some of the funding sources and grants that are available for school leaders today. Like high-impact technology strategies, understanding the funding and grant's landscape can help ensure maximum impact despite limited resources. The right funding for a project, the right goals and objectives, and the right outcomes can help ensure that your IT teams stay ahead and on top.

Thanks for reading our guide on 5 high-impact strategies for school leaders. Let's jump in.



## Strategy #1

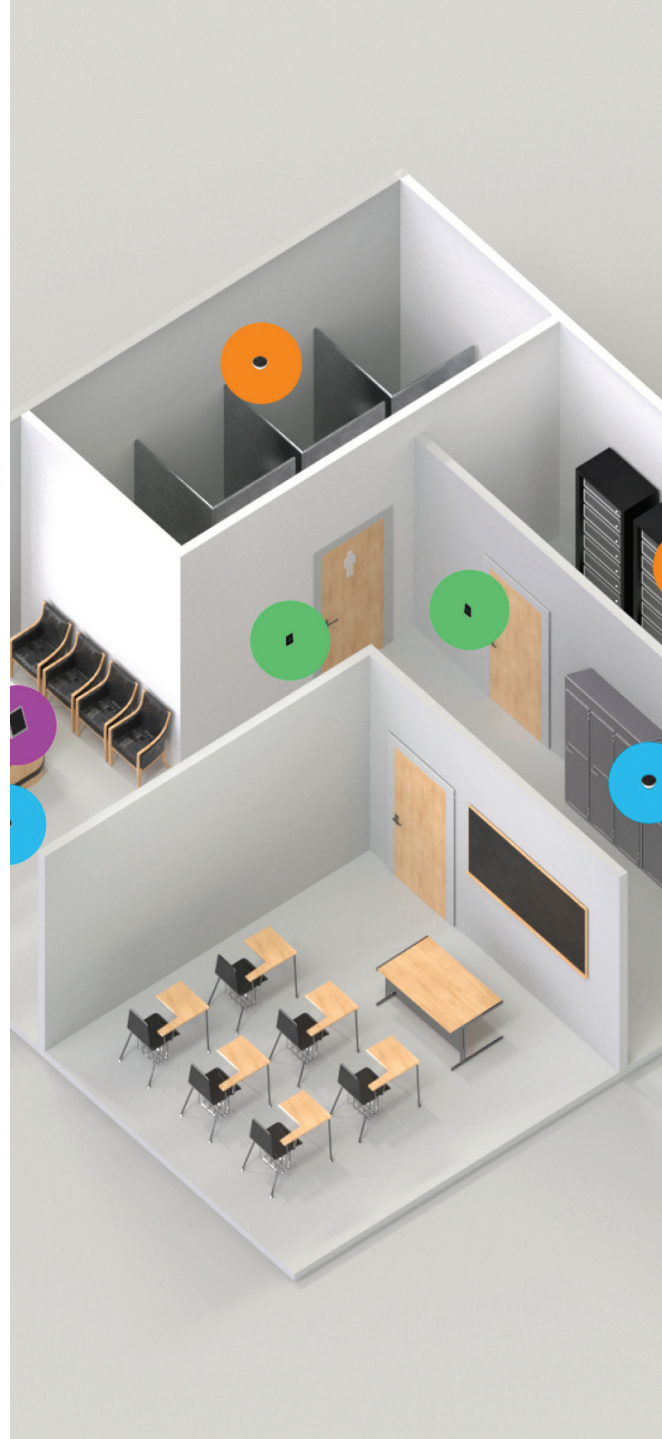
### Unify technology systems on one platform

Today's schools are more complicated than ever. More learning devices and tools, more health considerations, more school technology systems and, most importantly, more student and faculty needs. In such a rapidly changing environment, school and education IT leaders need to ensure that they stay ahead and stay informed.

Leaders in the IT and education space are working to use school and smart building technology to inform these needs. By unifying video security, environmental health and safety sensors, physical access control, guest check in and more behind a single pane of glass, leading schools can stay on top of changing needs and ahead of the next big thing.

Additionally, by taking a hybrid-cloud approach to physical security, IT leaders can deploy devices quickly and at scale. With Verkada, leaders can bring devices online in minutes. This allows for rapid iteration and adjustment to meet changing needs.

Moreover, Verkada's simplified cloud-based management enables leaders to quickly spot, assess and know what is happening in their environment. From noise level alerts to proactive person-of-interest notifications, having more information that is easily accessible allows IT leaders to quickly get up to speed with the needs of their students, faculty, staff, and community members.



**Frank Reeves**  
Superintendent,  
East Grand School District

"Before Verkada, nothing in the district really tied together. Each building had their own separate intercom system, their own separate camera system. We looked at all of it and built it into a master plan, but when we did that our security needs really showed up.

Now we have better security cameras and controlled door access. Our teachers have doors that lock from the inside so they don't have to go out into the hallway would we have to go into a lockdown. Ultimately, everything you can do to ensure people feel more secure helps provide a better learning experience.

Now, at Colorado schools we have modern, safe schools that kids want to be at."



## Strategy #2

### Use physical security devices for proactive insights

With every device unified on a single platform, it is possible to better uncover and act on insights.

#### Support policy compliance

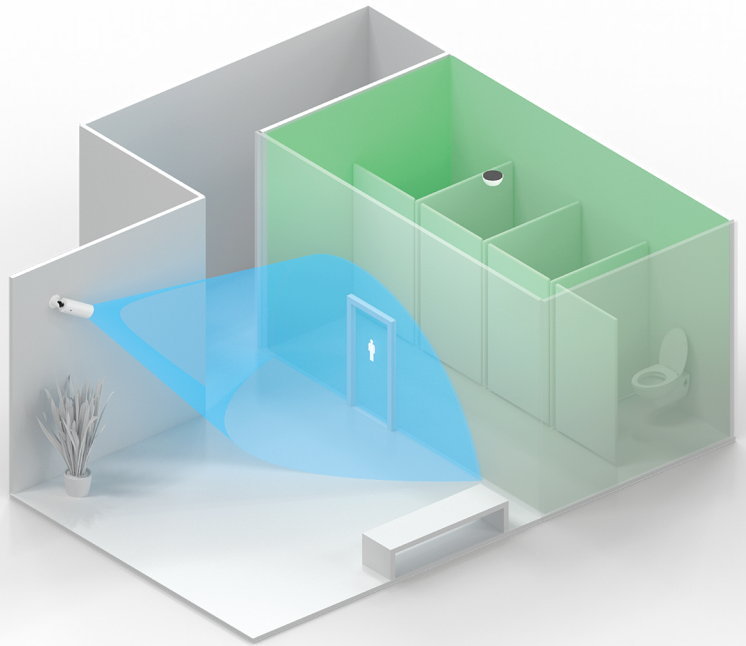
With a single platform for physical security, IT leaders have more tools to understand their environments and activities. With Verkada's Environmental Sensor, for example, IT leaders are able to detect and prevent student vaping and smoking. By placing an environmental sensor in a bathroom, locker room or other area where vaping is popular, leaders can get real-time notifications and alerts to detect and prevent vape events.

#### Monitor events and get proactive alerts

With information behind a single-pane-of glass, IT leaders can also receive proactive alerts to detect and assess events. Verkada's integrated security system makes it possible to detect and assess loud noises potentially indicating a fight, motion or tailgating near school entrances indicating potential safety risks, and more.

#### Understand access trends and space utilization

With unified access control and video security, school leaders are able to better understand how their spaces and schools are being utilized, from attendance verification to space utilization and ensuring personal safety.



**John Langrill**

Director of Information Technology  
and Campus Management  
Chartwell School

"As we prepare for the return-to-school and fire season, Verkada provides us with peace of mind and assurance that our students stay safe and healthy, that the air is well-filtered, and that our purification system is working as expected.

We can also tie our contextual cameras in with a vape sensor to get a text notification when a vape event happens. It is such a huge time saver for us. When there is a vape event, I get a text alert and I can then click directly on that link to go to that camera and event.

I can see when a true vape event happens instantly. With the vape detection, I can see the level of vape particles detected to detect, and prevent true vape events."



## Strategy #3

### Create an automated, real-time physical security response plan

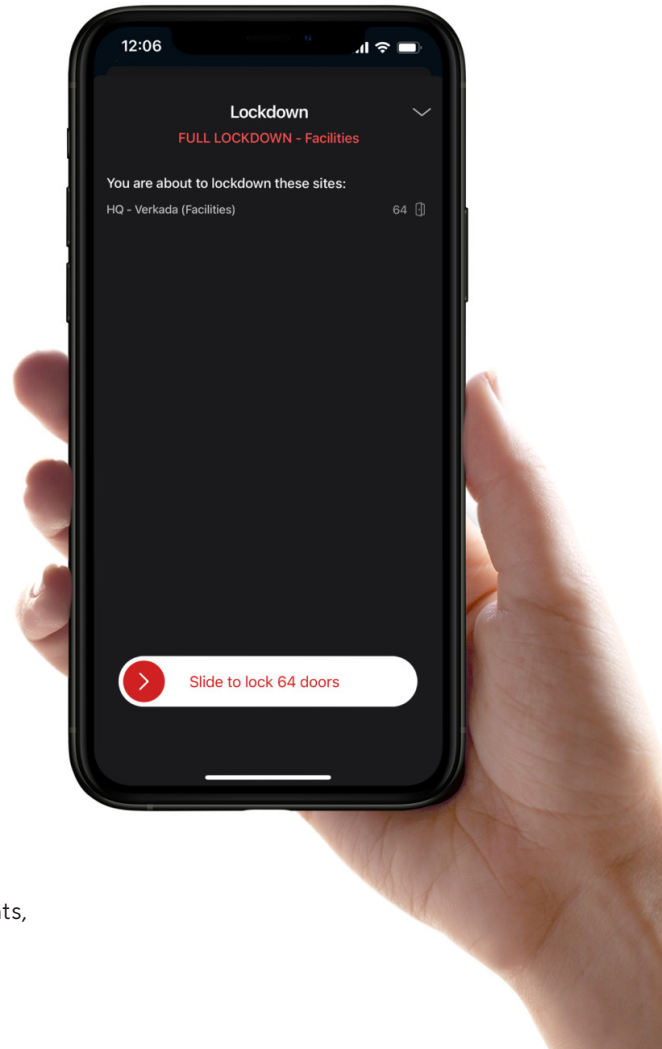
Beyond better understanding what is happening in your environment, having a network of smart devices allows IT and school leaders to better prepare for and respond to emergency scenarios. From proactive preparation to automated alerts and real-time response, having a physical security layer ontop of your school environment can help ensure the health and safety of your school.

#### Integrate technology into incident response plans

Incident response plans- from fire drills, to lockdowns, building evacuations and more-require a dedicated infrastructure to plan, prepare for and monitor for emergency scenarios. Many schools have response plans written on paper on a shelf, but IT and school leaders take those plans a step further and integrate them with technology to have a real-time incident response procedure.

#### Preconfigure response procedures in your physical environment

In addition to having the right system and plan in place, it is important to know how your physical environment will behave in an emergency scenario. In a lockdown scenario, how do doors lock? From the inside or outside? What is the real time status of emergency exits? Are they open? blocked? Where do students go in an evacuation scenario? Is there a roll-call system in place? Having a plan in place is the first step. Leaders need to go a step further to ensure that the plan can be actioned when it matters most. The last major step in configuring response procedures is to ensure that the right alerts and automated steps are put in place to monitor and stay on top of the events, variables and changes that can shape the behavior of a physical environment.



**Cameron Kukuchka**  
Director of Information  
Technology and Innovation  
Johnson County schools, WY

“To initiate a lockdown procedure, we just go to lockdown and activate it in command. It locks the doors instantly and we can continue to monitor the lockdown to resolve the situation or we can release the lockdown remotely.

This has been extremely helpful as we build out our lockdown procedures and drills. Recently, our Director of Curriculum initiated a lockdown during a drill. He initiated it from a button in our office and our Director of Facilities was immediately alerted so we could go through the drill process to assess and ultimately resolve and release the lockdown. In Command it is super easy to see the status of our lockdown scenario and remove it when resolved, whether from the physical button or from Command itself.”



## Strategy #4

### Health and safety start at the door

School safety and access are often well managed—over 95% of K-12 schools in the US have some form of access control on their exterior doors during school hours. Beyond securing doors, however, IT and school leaders are working to ensure health and safety by building seamless physical safety and entry systems within their schools. From keeping doors secure to making guests and visitors feel welcomed, it all falls under the purview of school leaders.

#### Securing every door

School leaders take a proactive, layered approach to physical security. The outermost layer of a campus—sporting fields, campus perimeters, parking lots—are often secured with video security and alarm systems. The secondary layer—the exterior doors of schools—are secured by physical access control systems with dedicated user privileges and logged access events. The inner most layer—classroom, library, office doors and more—are then secured by wired locks that can ensure safety and convenience for teachers and students alike.

#### Seamless, secure guest management

Beyond making the school entry and physical access experience secure for students and faculty, school leaders go further to greet and securely check-in guests to the school. From COVID screening and safety to background checks and more, proper guest management is a must. Beyond security, guests need to have a simplified approach to visiting a school safely. From check in to badging, the process can be automated to ensure a secure, seamless experience.



**Cameron Kukuchka**  
Director of Information  
Technology and Innovation  
Johnson County schools, WY

“With COVID coming to an end and our school opening back up, community members requested that we look at ways to vet visitors or volunteers before they enter our building. How can we safely allow people beyond students and teachers into the building? Verkada Guest is a perfect solution for that because it is an electronic check in, check out system and vetting process to prompt visitors with a COVID screen, a background check, and more.”



## Strategy #5

### Scale your IT team by empowering users

A frequent limiting function of school IT teams is sheer headcount. Many schools or districts have a small IT team of 1–5 users per school or district. For these IT teams, doing everything is impossible, but the needs of students and school safety remain. A key way school and IT leaders are starting to address these concerns and challenges is by empowering non-IT users to be more involved and active in using the technology systems and capabilities that a school has deployed.

With easy-to-deploy and use cloud technology, IT leaders can install systems and then configure dedicated profiles or systems for individual teachers, school-wide principles, or Superintendents. From day-to-day monitoring of video events and notable alerts to utilizing physical security systems in an emergency scenario, school leaders are doing more with their systems by putting these powerful, yet intuitive, systems in the hands of users across their schools.



**Marty Oliver**  
Technology Director  
Godley Independent  
School District

“We have 2,200 students and 5 campuses, but in a district of our size we have limited funding and staff. So in terms of IT there are only 3 of us. For us, Verkada is interesting in the sense that we can basically set up the system, turn it over to our principals - people that actually use the system—and then let them work on it. We [the IT team] don’t have to think about it.

When you look at the people who use the system, they know there is a system in place, and they should be able to see it when they need. So user experience is what we were going for—something clean and simple. Verkada allows teachers and others to easily find what they needed—no specific clients or other complicated IT systems needed. It’s all very easy and intuitive and it gets end users excited about our system.”





## Bonus Strategy #6

### Understand funding sources

#### Strategy Overview

School health and safety are ongoing priorities for Federal and State governments. Programs like the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provide school funding to address the impact of COVID-19 on elementary and secondary schools. Similarly, State and local legislation such as California's AB 211 law – which stipulates that school doors must be lockable from the inside – and New York's Alyssia's Law – which encourages schools to consider silent panic alarms systems as part of school safety plans – further 1) enforce the need for schools and other institutions to build robust yet simple emergency response capabilities, 2) provide guidance on how best to protect schools, and 3) often provide information on or direct funding for school health and safety initiatives.

Staying ahead and on top of the latest legislation and policy guidance helps ensure school leaders are up to speed with the most important aspects of school health and safety, as well as the legislation guiding and shaping what such health and safety initiatives should look like.

Last but not least, school leaders can stay ahead by deploying funds in the best way possible. Many ESSER I and ESSER II Funds, for example, have not yet been deployed, meaning school leaders have an opportunity to step in and find ways to bring broad regulatory guidance and best practices into practical strategies that can impact the health and safety of a school today.



#### OFFICE OF Elementary & Secondary Education



#### More Information on available grants:

<https://oese.ed.gov/>



#### ESSER Official Name:

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (Esser I and ESSER II) Fund

**Posting date:** March 27, 2020



**Closing date:** December 17, 2021

#### Access link:



<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/>

We hope that this white paper has provided some actionable strategies and approaches on how best to deploy and utilize the modern technology like Verkada's hybrid-cloud technology suite to stay ahead and stay on-top of various school health and safety measures in the constantly evolving school landscape.

If you want to try Verkada or learn more about our solution, don't hesitate to reach out to [sales@verkada.com](mailto:sales@verkada.com)



Thanks for reading  
Reach out to [sales@verkada.com](mailto:sales@verkada.com) for more info