

How an Emergency Notification System Can Help Retain Student Enrollment and Funding

By Dr. Roderick Sams

School enrollment numbers in American public schools are declining. Student and staff safety is one of the most prevalent concerns negatively impacting school enrollment in the United States. Enrollment decline is a complex challenge with serious implications, including reduced school funding, lower teacher retention, poor student learning outcomes, and struggling communities.

A powerful way that school districts can address this trend and increase enrollment is by investing in layered safety plans and programs that utilize an innovative school alert system. Such measures help promote the safety of students and educators, allowing them to focus on creating and benefiting from quality educational experiences while fostering trust.

School Enrollment Numbers are Declining

The decline of school enrollment in the U.S. is closely associated with population trends. While some states are seeing an increase in the overall population, most are experiencing declines.

[From 2020-2023:](#)

- 6 states increased their overall population by 6%, while 18 states saw a population decline.
- 26 states reported overall declines in K-12 enrollment.
- 8 states experienced population growth but saw a decline in K-12 enrollment.
- By 2031, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and West Virginia are projected to see more than a 10% drop in enrollment while Hawaii is projected to experience the most significant enrollment decline of 16%.

[Research](#) estimates that "...public schools will lose 16 million additional students by 2030, putting enrollment at or slightly above 50% of the market." But where are these students going? Many parents are unenrolling their students from public schools and choosing to homeschool.

[Stanford University](#) reports that 26% of students who exited public schools between fall 2019 and spring 2022 transitioned to homeschooling. This trend is evident in the [2022-23 school year data](#), which shows that 5.2% of students aged 5-17 received home-based instruction, compared to just 3.7% four years earlier.

The decision to homeschool and a decline in overall K-12 enrollment share a common factor: a concern for safety. Many parents report safety as the deciding factor for enrollment, and [34%](#) of

parents who decide to homeschool their children do so because of the rise in school violence. An increase in nationwide school violence means many parents are uncertain that schools can be places of safety. This trend has significant social implications. For school districts, it has significant financial ones, too.

School Violence Causes Enrollment Declines and Decreased Funding

School violence causes an increase in spending in the aftermath of a single violent incident as schools attempt to strengthen infrastructure, enhance safety resources, and provide mental health services—all in addition to the cost of declining enrollment. From a financial perspective, violence in schools:

- is associated with an average increased spending of [\\$248 per student](#).
- increases taxes, as the federal government serves as the primary source of funding for new school safety costs.
- results in higher-income families unenrolling from public schools with higher incidents of violence and moving to districts they consider safer.

Enrollment matters. The higher the number of students, [the more funding schools receive](#). As families leave and the number of students decreases in a district, so does the budgetary impetus to continue to fund that district at the same levels. Yet the costs to maintain schools remain the same.

Investments in Safety are Investments in Enrollment

Comprehensive school safety plans incorporating emergency notification systems help make schools safer. Safety solutions work in tandem with other [evidence-based strategies](#) like:

- active shooter response training and other lockdown drills
- coordination with law enforcement/first responders
- threat assessment standards and practices that include visitor screenings
- training programs centered on helping staff and students manage trauma and build resilience techniques

Although the threat of violence cannot be realistically eliminated, it can be mitigated. The best practice for mitigation is to incorporate proven emergency notification systems when drafting multi-layered safety plans. These strategies bolster safety and, by extension, enrollment numbers.

Safe students are more likely to thrive. According to the [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#), "...school safety is linked to improved student and school outcomes. In particular, emotional and physical safety in school are related to academic performance. At the same time, students who are victims of physical or emotional harassment or who are involved in [other negative behaviors] are at risk for poor attendance, course failure, and school dropout."

Proactive school safety measures help maintain and improve school enrollment and are essential to achieving positive, long-lasting outcomes in students' lives. Innovative technology can support many of those school safety measures.

School Safety Solutions Help Districts Create a Culture of Safety

Comprehensive student support programs and safety plans that mitigate the risk of violence are a strong basis for success. When incidents occur, the most crucial factor is time. The best multi-layered safety plans are enhanced by safety solutions that enable a rapid response.

A school alert system is a foundational part of a layered safety plan and aids in reporting to meet state requirements to help secure funding.

Wearable Badge

Single-button, wearable panic badges that staff can use to quickly and discreetly request help to their exact location, no matter where they are on campus, are a crucial component of an effective school alert system. Wearable badges empower staff to take action and make every second matter.

Critical Incident Mapping

Details and a single source of truth are important. A critical incident mapping solution that pairs with wearable panic badges to display the room—and floor-level location of an alert, as well as nearby safety assets, enables efficiency and a rapid, coordinated response from everyone involved.

Visitor Management

Screening every person who visits a school campus is critical to school safety. An effective visitor management solution screens every visitor on campus every time, as well as enables administrators to locate all visitors in the building in real time and review detailed reporting of where they have been on campus.

Reunification

Ensuring the right student is reunited with the right caregiver is integral to any safety plan. A reunification solution should digitize this process and pair with your visitor management solution to restore order and peace of mind after an emergency occurs.

Protect your School District with the Right Emergency Notification System

All of these school safety factors contribute to the goal of safer students and educators. However, they also provide a vital framework for gathering information and setting a baseline for safety. The right technology can generate a reportable history of how a school district has taken proactive measures to guard against threats.

Safety is a key factor that affects enrollment and, therefore, school funding. Knowing that staff are empowered to take action and make every second matter when an emergency occurs helps instill confidence and bring peace of mind to families. It's also an investment in better outcomes for students and their teachers as they build the knowledge and experiences to make a better future for themselves and their communities.

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