



Case study



Spartanburg, South Carolina School District 6 Enhances School Safety With Free-flow Weapons Detection Powered by Evolv Express®

Organization Overview

ORGANIZATION: Spartanburg County School District 6

LOCATION: Spartanburg, SC

STUDENTS: Approximately 11,500

FACULTY/STAFF: 1600

SCHOOLS: 2 High Schools, 3 Middle Schools, 9 Elementary Schools

SECURITY STAFF: 6

URL: www.spart6.org

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Avoid lengthy security queues associated with walk-through metal detectors
- Get students into school safely and to their classrooms in time
- Adjust security sensitivity settings based on threat levels
- Streamline bagcheck processes without diminishing effectiveness of weapons detection
- Leverage teachers and administrative staff to help with weapons security detection and screening
- Create additional security line of defense via security guards stationed at each ingress point

Solution

People

- Trained security staff, teachers, and administrative staff on operating Evolv Express systems
- Coached team on bagcheck processes and how to adjust and manage threat-level sensitivity settings on Express system

Process

- Configured and deployed 3 Evolv Express® systems for initial launch at Dorman Freshman Campus in August 2019; subsequently added 2 Express dual lane and 1 single lane Express systems at main Dorman High School campus
- Successfully deployed Express systems at three middle school campuses

Technology

- 8 Evolv Express® Dual Lane Systems
- 6 Evolv Express Single Lane Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI™
- Evolv Insights™



Completed 1-week onboarding and rollout with great feedback from parents, students, and teachers



Deliver seamless, free-flow weapons-detection experience for students and visitors



Sustain always-on weapons detection and screening without any security queues



Leverage teachers and administrative staff during 30-minute school arrival times to help manage weapons detection and screening



Created an additional layer of security with security guards managing each to Express system throughout the day



Complete average bagcheck in less than 20 seconds by pinpointing the potential area of the weapon in real time



Ensure student safety with weapons detection and screening while getting them to their classrooms on time



Forward-thinking Innovation Infuses New Idea

The Spartanburg, South Carolina District 6 School District prides itself on being forward-thinking and progressive. It was, for example, the first district in South Carolina to have all of its schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Its unwavering commitment to its students and local community doesn't stop with academics. Keeping its students and staff safe from threats is also a top priority for the district. Dr. Mark Smith has served the district for 24 years as a teacher, principal, and administrator. "The safety of our students and staff is the first thing that I thought of every day when I woke up and the last thing that I thought about when I went to bed," he says. "We've all witnessed the tragedy of school shootings over the years, and it is our worst nightmare."

About four years ago, the district named Smith the Director of Student Services and Transportation. Working with the superintendent of the district, Smith instituted new security measures, such as a 360 communications incident response plan, to minimize risk in the event a weapon was brought onto one of the district's campuses. "We didn't want to wait for an incident to occur, but rather wanted to proactively get out in front to prevent such from happening in the first place," he relates.



We literally have students coming and going all day long at our high school campuses," Smith relates. "We call it the 'Greatest Show on Earth' that never sleeps—with constant throughput all of the time."

- Dr. Mark Smith, Director of Student Services and Transportation,
Spartanburg School District

Walk-through Metal Detectors Not an Option

Smith and other members of the team started vetting walk-through metal detectors as an option.

“Only three percent of schools in the country at the time had metal detectors in place,” Smith notes. However, metal detectors are traditionally invasive and known to cause delays at ingress, creating long lines outside of the security checkpoint. This creates a safety concern in itself, as someone could inflict harm on the waiting crowd. When considering metal detectors for the Spartanburg School District, Smith informed the superintendent that there was no way walk-through metal detectors would work for the schools.

“We have a great culture in our schools, and forcing kids—in addition to parents and visitors—to wait in long queues and go through extensive bagchecks every time they entered one of our campuses would

not work,” he says. In his continued search for other options, Smith located a district in Asheville, North Carolina that was an early adopter of Evolv.

“When we went out there, we found a completely different experience—no security queues and significantly fewer bag checks,” he observes. “I knew this was the type of experience and atmosphere we wanted in District Six. Oftentimes, schools with walk-through metal detectors suffer from extremely long lines of students waiting at security screening entrances. Witnessing this firsthand, further cemented our decision that the free-flow weapons detection systems from Evolv were the right choice.”



The Evolv team spent time coaching us on risk management and how to fluctuate them between the five different levels. The ability to adjust the sensitivity of the systems helps us keep the kids from figuring out what is going on with the systems.”

- Dr. Mark Smith, Director of Student Services and Transportation,
Spartanburg School District

Deploying the Evolv Express® Systems

When the district decided to move forward with Evolv, the initial plan was to use the Evolv Edge® system. “A week before the rollout our Evolv consultant came to me and told me that he has secured some dual and single lane Express systems for us instead,” Smith recalls. “We would be the first school in the country to use the Express system—which was just being released to the market.”

Smith and his team targeted August 2019 for the initial rollout of the Evolv systems. Part of the process included hiring security guards to manage each entry point. “We literally have students coming and going all day long at our high school campuses,” Smith relates. “Many of our students have classes at our Technology Center, which is not on one of our main campuses. We call it the ‘Greatest Show on Earth’ that never sleeps—with constant throughput all of the time. Having this additional human touch point at all of our entrances gives us another line of defense.”

The initial deployment occurred at District 6’s two high school campuses—two Express dual-lane systems and two single lane systems at the Dorman High School campus, and two Express dual-

lane systems and one single lane at the Dorman Freshman School campus. This was a significant undertaking with around 3,700 students across both campuses. The Evolv team worked with Smith and his team to match system selection to each school’s requirements. “They were invaluable in helping us to assess student arrival curves and counts throughout the school day,” Smith says.

Rollout of the Express systems at the district’s three middle school campuses, which have around 3,000 students, took place in January 2020. Fairforest Middle School has one dual-lane system and one single lane, Dawkins Middle School has two dual-lane and one single lane systems, and Gable Middle School has three single-lane systems.

School	Express Single Lane	Express Dual Lane
Dorman High School Campus	2	2
Dorman Freshman Campus	1	2
Fairforest Middle School	1	1
Dawkins Middle School	1	2
Gable Middle School	3	0

Table 1. Express system distribution at 5 District 6 schools.

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Spartanburg School District

Onboarding District 6 and Initial Response

Before the district rolled out the Express systems, the Evolv deployment team spent a week at the two high school campuses training and imparting best practices to security guards, teachers, and administrators from District 6.

"We had 9 or 10 members from Evolv onsite throughout the week working with us," Smith notes. "On the day of the launch, they helped ensure that we had no issues. Peter George, who wasn't yet the company's CEO but one of the company's top executives, was even there. I saw this guy in a suit and tie running one of our freshman lines and asked our Evolv account team who he was. It's just another example of Evolv's commitment to our success."

To prepare students, parents, and others for the initial deployment of the Express systems, Smith worked with the district's CCO Cynthia Robinson to record a video with the student council detailing the reasons for the system and what students, parents, and visitors to the schools would experience.

Students quickly pass through screen individually or in groups with backpacks on their shoulders, phones and keys in their pockets, and musical instrument cases at their sides. "The Cortex AI™ software is trained to differentiate weapons from personal items like these, which helps us avoid many of the false positives that plague walk-through metal detectors," Smith says.

The response of parents to the Evolv deployment has been very positive. "We literally have had two complaints since we deployed the Express systems at our schools," Smith notes. "And one was a parent who thought we should have conducted a more thorough search of her child. The response from all of our different constituents has been very, very positive."



“

We didn't want to wait for [a weapons] incident to occur, but rather wanted to proactively get out in front to prevent such from happening in the first place.”

- Dr. Mark Smith, Director of Student Services and Transportation, Spartanburg School District



Weapons Detection and Screening Process

One aspect that Smith really likes about the Express system is the ability to adjust the sensitivity.

“Risk management is not something that schools know about,” he says. “The Evolv team spent time coaching us on risk management and how to fluctuate them between the five different levels. The ability to adjust the sensitivity of the systems helps us keep the kids from figuring out what is going on with the systems.”

Under normal circumstances, the district’s goal is to search about 20 to 25 percent of students. But even then, the process is streamlined because of the Express system capabilities. “The Evolv team worked with us to learn how to conduct a thorough but rapid search of a bag in less than 20 seconds,” Smith says. “Knowing exactly where the suspected object is located obviously streamlines the entire process. It’s all there in real time on the tablet devices. We’ve also trained our staff to keep the mission in focus. It’s to detect weapons out of the school and not other items.”

Full-time security guards manage each Express system. When students arrive in the morning for classes, teachers and administrative staff help with bagchecks and other screening processes. “The Evolv team helped us train them on the Express system, and they get a stipend per semester for spending 30 minutes of their time each morning,” Smith says. “The Express is very easy to operate, and the process has been very easy.”

“The safety of our students and staff is the first thing that I thought of every day when I woke up and the last thing that I thought about when I went to bed. We’ve all witnessed the tragedy of school shootings over the years, and it is our worst nightmare.”

- Dr. Mark Smith, Director of Student Services and Transportation, Spartanburg School District

Personalized Touchpoints with Evolv

According to Smith, engagement with the Evolv team has been impressive from the very start.

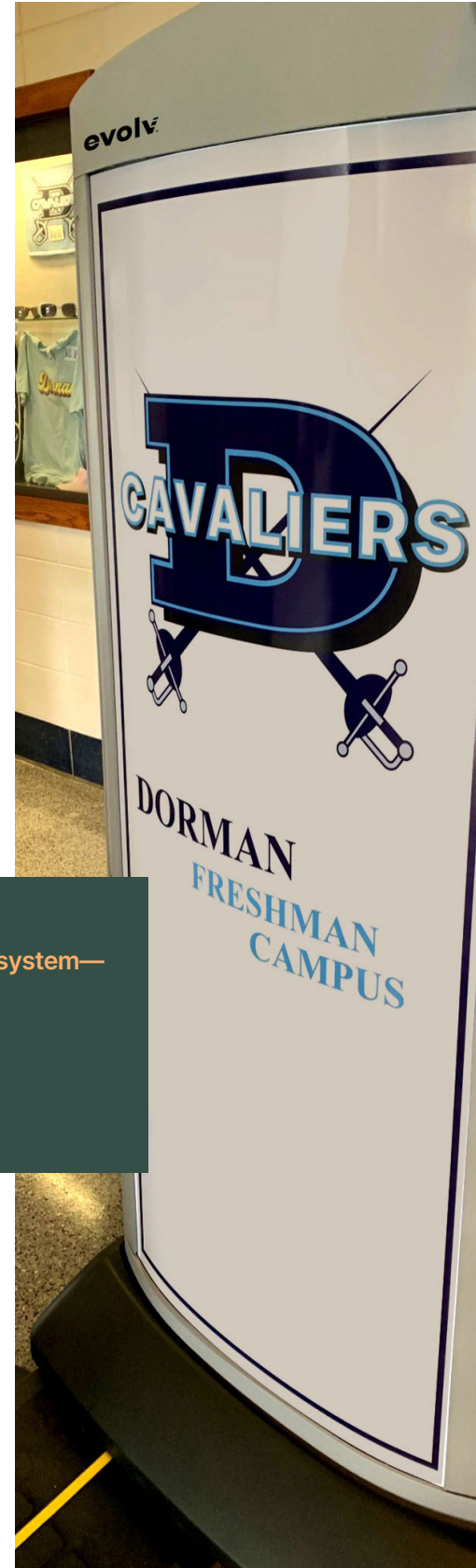
“Too often, with many of our technology solutions, we cannot get customer service or tech support,” he says. “Evolv has given us a personalized touchpoint throughout the relationship. For example, we had one instance this past year where technical support contacted me before we even knew one of our Express systems was down. They let me know they were sending someone out to work on it—and I didn’t even know it had a problem. I truly love working with the entire team from Evolv—from our account manager, to technical support personnel, to the executive team.”

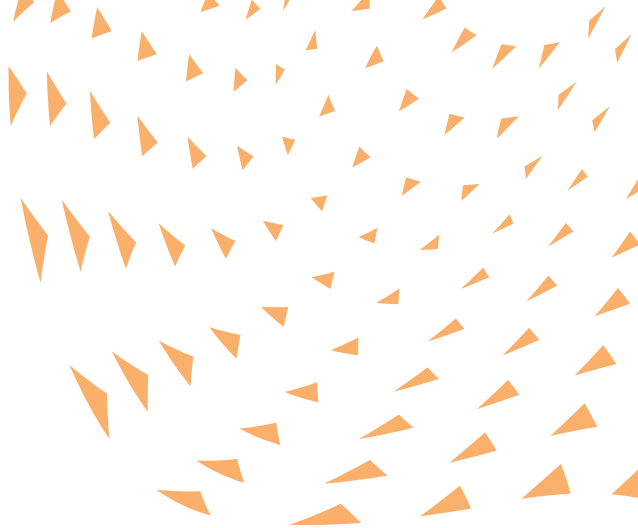
Smith and other leaders from the District 6 team believe having a weapons detection and screening solution like Evolv’s is a nonnegotiable for a public school system. “I have four kids in our public schools,” he explains. “Their safe return each day is my foremost concern. If harm comes to one of my children while they are at school, I’m never going to forgive you. When you think about it, parents entrust us with a huge responsibility. Our Evolv investment is less than one percent of our annual budget. When you think of it in this way, the expenditure is well worth it.”



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- Dr. Mark Smith, Director of Student Services and Transportation,
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