

Door Security + Safety

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Access Control and Security

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The main entrance to Sussex Consortium, a public school facility that serves special needs students on Cape Henlopen in Sussex County, Delaware, and surrounding areas.

BY ERIC SCHAEFFER

Seamless Security Integration for a New School

Expert security integration allows special needs school to open this fall amidst pandemic challenges.

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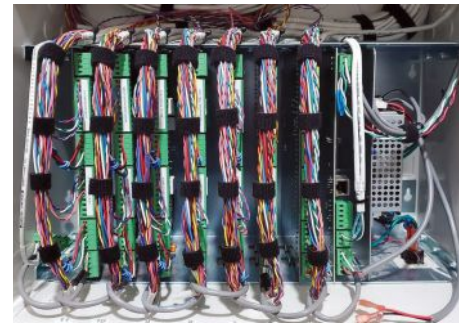
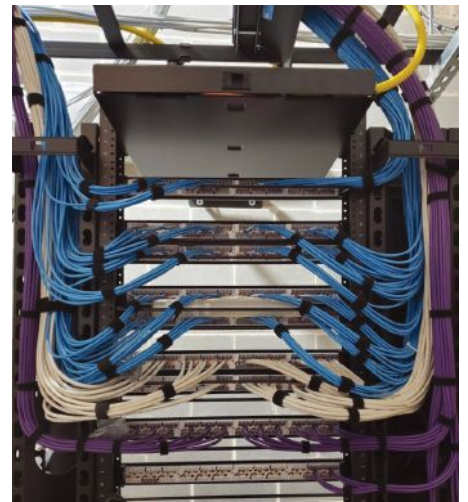
The newly completed Sussex Consortium is a public school facility that serves special needs students on Cape Henlopen in Sussex County, Delaware, and surrounding areas. It was completely funded by the state and opened in September 2020.

The \$44 million project was designed by Fearn-Clendaniel Architects, Inc. and construction management was provided by Richard Y. Johnson & Son, Inc.

The school serves more than 360 students, ranging in age from 3 to 21, through its special needs programs and the Sussex County chapter of the Delaware Autism Program. With additional services offered such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and adaptive physical education, the Consortium's programs and training techniques have been studied by, and used as models for, schools throughout the area.

Before moving to its new home, the Consortium was a district-wide program with select intensive learning centers embedded in individual schools and a separate 100-year-old building for the most intense programs for students unable to attend school in mainstream settings.

With exponential growth from previous years and increasing concern over the unique security and safety protocols required for the students, the State of Delaware granted funds to construct a new special needs-specific facility designed specifically for the needs of the students.



Top: The back of a server rack where Cat 6 cable has been “punched down” - a good example of structured cabling termination.

Bottom: A beautifully wired Honeywell access control panel that supports both wired and wireless ASSA ABLOY Aperio doors within the space.

Left: Honeywell access control devices and Intrusion door contacts were installed at each of Sussex Consortium’s entry points, allowing for perimeter security monitoring and complete control of all doors. For visitor assistance notification, a Morpho biometric reader was installed at an intake point to facilitate coordination for students needing entry assistance.

Original plans called for a 67,000-square-foot building with 28 classrooms. Construction began in May 2018, but the original timetable was extended after the state awarded additional funding in August 2018, allowing for a swimming pool, 18 additional classrooms, and a second gym bringing the total square footage to nearly 100,000.

SPECIAL PLANNING

Constructing a highly specified, nontraditional special needs school takes additional planning, advanced technology, and heightened security measures. To ensure success, collaboration between administration, teachers, therapists, medical

professionals, parents, architects and construction contractors was necessary. Acoustics, aesthetics, biophilic designs, special equipment, specific furniture, unique layouts and building security are just some of the considerations.

The design and operation of the school’s access control and physical security systems were particularly critical to the success of the project. In addition to video coverage at all entrances, for example, blind spots had to be eliminated in all hallways and common areas of the facility. When it came time to select a vendor for the school’s physical security and emergency communication needs, administrators awarded the work to Dover-based Advantech.

“Choosing vendors who had stellar past performance in similar jobs was important to our school board and administrators,” says Brian Bassett, Director of Capital Projects, Cape Henlopen Schools. “We’ve worked with Advantech on several other projects. From our experiences with them, we know that they’re competent in designing communication and security solutions specific to educational facilities and are experts in security integration.”

THE SECURITY SYSTEM

Advantech’s expertise in specifying and installing electronic door hardware was extremely important as the security management system controls nearly 150 doors.



Above: One of six IDF/MDF closets in the Consortium contain components that support the facility's access, camera, and paging solutions, including Honeywell access control panels, Altronix power supply enclosures, and low-voltage structured cabling.

Right: In case of emergency, Advantech integrated a Honeywell Notifier fire alarm system and bi-directional amplification system. For quick communication and correspondence, panic/lockdown buttons and a Bogen public address system were included.



Advantech's Eric Schaeffer worked with the school to educate officials on varying resolutions. Ultimately, an integrated solution was selected to tie into the district's pre-existing technology platforms seamlessly and provide the Sussex Consortium a higher, and more immediate, level of security.

Technology integrated within the Consortium includes surveillance cameras, access control, intrusion detection, panic/lockdown buttons, intercom/amplification systems, fire alarms/emergency communication and visitor management systems.

Advantech considered multiple factors in the solution design, keeping the sensitivity of the student population in mind.

To ensure complete coverage of the facility and surrounding school grounds, interior and exterior Internet Protocol (IP)-based Axis Communications surveillance cameras were strategically installed across campus.

Honeywell access control and intrusion devices with HID credentials and Morpho biometric readers were installed at each entry - providing

the opportunity to easily and simultaneously control all doors. Stentofon IP-based intercoms were also added to main entries so administration can easily verify and admit visitors.

In case of emergency, Advantech also integrated in a Honeywell Notifier fire alarm system and bi-directional amplification system. For quick communication and correspondence, panic/lockdown buttons and a Bogen public address system were included.

The integrated system can be monitored and controlled via a graphical mapping tool that allows administrators to quickly identify alarm locations and view corresponding cameras. This intuitive tool provides a graphical display of the facility via extremely reliable programmable logic controller integration of the Milestone video system, security systems and emergency communications system.

OVERCOMING PANDEMIC OBSTACLES

Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, where most contractors were either

slowed or stopped, Advantech continued to work with the Richard Y. Johnson & Son construction management team to coordinate installation with the Division 8 contractor and complete the project on time.

"This project has been more challenging than any we've taken on before. Every week, it felt like we were running into brick wall after brick wall," Bassett notes. "But, we always reminded ourselves that these kids are worth running through brick walls for."

Dean Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of Richard Y. Johnson & Son, agrees and adds, "We're thrilled to be part of such a ground-breaking program!"



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