10 Ways to Maximize Your School ID Card Program

How to improve the return on investment for your school ID card program

Whether your school has already purchased an ID card printer or you are considering bringing your student ID printing in-house with a new system, there are many ways you can help offset the cost of your initial investment by simply expanding how you use your ID cards. With a little creativity, your ID cards can be put to use for more than just identification and can help improve efficiency, streamline operations, motivate students, raise funds for student activities, as well as improve safety for students and faculty.

Our team of ID professionals offers some ideas to help you make the most of your ID card printer by offering 10 ideas for multi-function cards that will help you maximize your ID card program for a greater ROI on your initial investment.

(1) Monitor and control who has access to your school

One of the keys to creating a safe school is controlling who's in it. Using magnetic stripe, proximity card, or smart card technology, your ID cards can control access to your building or specific areas within your school. An access control system will allow you to control who enters your facility – not only during school hours, but at all times of the day, such as when a teacher is alone in the building working late. An automated system provides records of exactly who is in your facility and when they're in it.

TIP: Customized visitor badges are a simple way to visually distinguish guests from students and faculty. Using re-write technology in your ID card printer will allow you to print reusable visitor badges that can be customized for each visitor. When purchasing your ID card printer, look for a printer with re-write technology that will allow you to re-print visitor badges easily as needed.

(2) Store additional student information and data

An ID card can hold important student information, such as class schedules, emergency contact information, medications, locker combinations, and allergies. Easy access to information like this is not only convenient, but it could also save a life!

TIP: If you aren't already printing to both sides of the card, consider a dual-sided ID card printer so that the front of your cards remains clean and uncluttered.

There are a few ways to add data to your ID cards:

- Barcodes allow you to store small amounts of data on cards, in either 1-D linear codes or 2-D QR codes. While QR codes store more data and take up less space than linear codes, software with QR code capability is needed. Any ID card printer can create a barcode.
- Magnetic stripes allow larger amounts of data to be stored directly to the card. You'll need a printer and software with mag encoding capability.
- Smart cards offer the greatest amount of data storage and the highest level of data security. You'll need a printer and software with smart card encoding capability.

(3) Create a cashless cafeteria

There are a variety of cafeteria point-of-sale applications on the market, most of which use a card with either a barcode or magnetic stripe. Barcodes can store lunch account numbers, which are debited on the backend when a lunch is purchased. A magnetic stripe card can store value, just as a gift card does. Cashless cafeterias are proven to have faster serving lines and higher food sales! An automated lunch program also allows you to compile and retrieve data for lunch planning or a parent's inquiry into their child's lunch account.

TIP: If your school isn't ready to implement cashless payments now, but will be in the future, choose a printer that can easily be upgraded to include magnetic stripe encoding. Some printers offer encoding modules that are field upgradeable, allowing your printer to easily grow as your needs change.

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(4) Verify school bus access

In addition to building security, it's also important to provide safe transportation, including ensuring only authorized riders are allowed on the school bus. The bus number can easily be added to your student IDs, thus improving security as well as providing a means to ensure each student gets on the right bus.

TIP: Take this one step farther with contactless smart cards that can be scanned each time a student gets on and off the bus, allowing you to track if a student rode the bus home and what location they were dropped off at.

(5) Track attendance, tardies and event participation

You can also integrate your school attendance into your ID card program. ID software programs can record tardiness and absences, issue tardy slips, assign warnings and detention, and even send email notices to parents. This type of system makes it easy to view and print reports. Plus, when students know this type of system is in place, tardiness typically declines!

TIP: Add fully-featured ID card software to your student ID card program for advanced tracking and reporting features.

(6) Manage library and/or equipment checkout

Gone are the days of a paper check-out form for library books or equipment. Automating these functions will save your school labor costs and easily track the location of school equipment and books.

(7) Manage access to computers and other technology

Password-protected computers have been put in place for years. Add another layer of security by requiring a swipe of an authorized ID card. Permissions can be assigned to the card to allow access to programs, printers, etc.

(8) Motivate students

Get creative with your ID card program and make it fun for students. For example, Royal Spring Middle School in Georgetown, Kentucky has proven that an ID card can also motivate students. Every nine weeks, after grades are posted, students are issued a reward card for academic success. The back of their ID has a list of coupons and offerings from local businesses. A local bank also takes part in the program by depositing $1 for every A into a student's savings account.

"*The students work hard to receive the cards*," says Carmen Wallin at Royal Spring Middle School. "*Many students don't even use the coupons. It's more about the recognition for a job well done*."

Wallin reports that at least half of the kids receive a reward card. And because the program restarts every quarter, students are given a fresh start toward earning the card every nine weeks. We give this ID card program an A+!

(9) Create activity cards for parents

Put your printer to use for parents as well as students by printing sponsored activity cards that can be purchased for entry to afterschool activities. Sponsorship levels can easily be designated by color of the card. Keep your cost low by printing simple monochrome text on colored cards and customize for each participant.

(10) Create sponsorship cards for fundraising

Use your printer to create a sponsorship program by offering discounts at local participating establishments. Sponsor cards can be sold to parents and community members to help raise funds for school activities. Participant discounts are managed through the magnetic stripe on the cards, similar to a loyalty card you use at the grocery store.

The uses for ID cards are limitless. With a little creativity and the right ID technology, your school can experience improved efficiency and cost savings for a greater return on your investment.

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