

identiMetrics Brings Biometrics to

Manheim Central School District



Located in northwestern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the Manheim Central School District is a growing community that encompasses about 78 square miles of scenic agricultural lands being increasingly converted to residential use. The School District lies approximately seven miles north of Lancaster, approximately eighty miles west of Philadelphia.

As Food Service Director for Manheim Central School District, I'm responsible for all aspects of administering breakfast and lunch services to students and staff at each of our schools. We were using a point of sale system that requires parents to prepay their children's accounts. Students used cards to access their accounts.

The problem was the lack of security with the cards. Students shared their cards. They also forgot their cards, especially in the middle school where they weren't permitted to carry their backpacks to class and often didn't have pockets in their clothing so they didn't have any place to keep the cards. Misplaced or lost cards had to be paid for by parents. Both the Principals, my staff and I spent too much time having to talk to disgruntled parents about the problems with their accounts. This is certainly not an efficient way to spend precious time and money.

Our goal was simple: find a way to guarantee the security of the students' accounts. When I put money in my bank, I know that my money is safe. I wanted the same level of security with our system.

I had looked into biometrics a few years ago and met with objections. I believed that now the time was right. We were opening a new middle school complete with state-of-the-art technology. I have been involved in the food service industry for 34 years and with the Manheim Central School District for six years. I sit on an administrative team spearheaded by our Superintendent that really wanted to make this new biometric system work. We chose identiMetrics because they are leaders in implementing biometrics in schools and

especially understand the unique needs of school food service.

identiMetrics' solution, identiFi, scans a student's finger for identification. It seamlessly integrated with our cafeteria application so we didn't have to spend money to replace what we already had. There was an added bonus: once we enrolled the students and installed identiFi in the cafeteria, we used the same biometric database in the media center to identify students.

The most important aspect of implementing a biometric student ID system is taking the time to do it right. We sent information home to the parents and informed the students, teachers and administration. Also, my staff was part of the whole process. We enrolled the students during the Open House so the parents could see the enrollment process. My staff was there to answer questions. The middle school cafeteria manager constructed an informative visual display board which captured the attention of students and parents. The real key to success was the team approach and total district support that was given to this initiative. The middle school principal, the superintendent, school administration, tech services and my staff joined together to make this implementation seamless.

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How's it working? Our plan was to roll out the middle school this year and the high school next year. We had to change our plan because of pressure from parents and administration to roll out the high school this year as well! We have an opt out policy and had one line allocated for students that opted out. Most of these students have now requested to be scanned. The students understand that we don't take actual finger prints and all of the templates are deleted when they graduate or no longer attend school. They also realize that the real privacy concern is losing the card and that biometrics really protects their privacy.

Best of all, we have not had one parent call this year about account problems. Pretty remarkable! We reached our goal.



Mary Moyer, PRSBS
Director Food Service