



How New Berlin Junior High Transformed Safety Culture with CrisisGo



New Berlin Junior High School
New Berlin, IL
Number of Students: 750

Background

When Brandon Radford stepped into his role as Principal at New Berlin Junior High, located just west of Springfield, Illinois, he knew that creating a safe and supportive environment wasn't a checkbox—it was a commitment. In a district that spans nearly 190 square miles and serves roughly 750 students, ensuring student and staff safety presented both logistical and cultural challenges.

"We've always had safety at the forefront," Brandon says. "But with a brand-new building and new opportunities, we asked ourselves, 'How can we be better?'"

Building a Culture of Accountability

Brandon is candid about what keeps him up at night: "My biggest worry is accountability. If a parent comes to me and says, 'Where's my child?'—the last thing I want to say is 'I don't know.'"

Prior to implementing CrisisGo, the district had basic tools in place, but lacked the visibility and responsiveness they needed. Students attending classes offsite, such as those going to the Capital Area Career Center (CACC) in Springfield, weren't easily tracked. Staff moved between buildings, creating additional complexity. That all changed with CrisisGo.

"With CrisisGo, we can mark students as offsite within the app," Brandon explains. "That was functionality we didn't have before. It's been a game changer."

Training, Practice, Repeat

From the outset, Brandon and his administrative team made a deliberate decision: implementation wasn't going to be superficial. "One of the biggest things we've done is monthly training with staff. We have meetings every month, and we use those to run training scenarios in the app."

This consistency built familiarity. It also revealed pain points. "I used to be a coach," he shares. "You learn more in practice than you do in the game. We learned so much during our reunification drill. We thought we were ready, but quickly realized the building we secured wasn't big enough. Over one weekend, we had to pivot and find a new location."

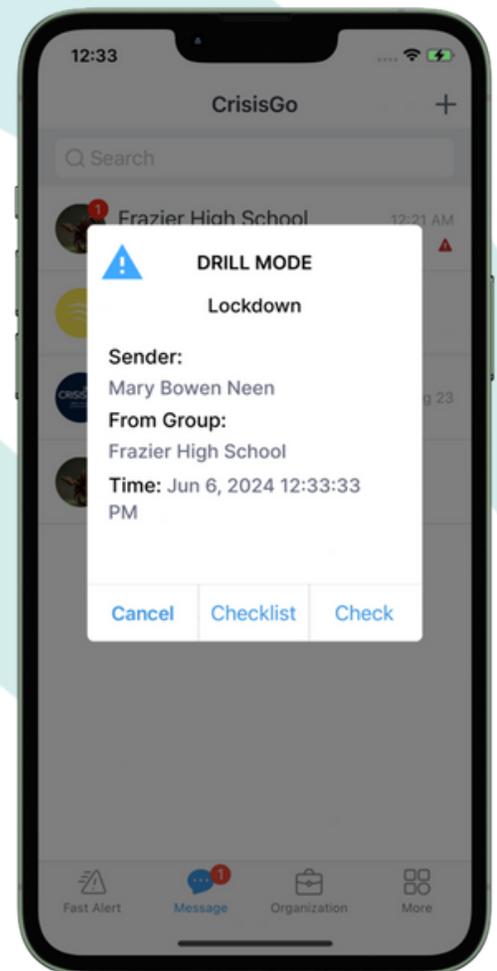
That practice-only drill was conducted as a professional development day with just staff. Even so, the insights were profound. "I couldn't imagine doing a real reunification without practicing first," Brandon adds. "It was invaluable."

Embracing Technology at Every Level

Technology adoption in schools can be uneven. Brandon was well aware of that. "Even in 2025, people are at all different levels with technology. Some of our staff had never downloaded an app before," he admits. "CrisisGo helped me identify who hadn't downloaded the app or who wasn't receiving alerts. That allowed us to step in and support them, rather than just assume they were onboard."

With repetition and scenario-based training, staff comfort grew. "It became about muscle memory," he says. "Take attendance first. Mark yourself safe. Then any additional info."

The admin team utilizes the "Staff Assist" button within the CrisisGo platform. "If someone needs help escorting a student to the nurse or the bathroom, they hit a button. Instead of 20 people responding on radios, now the right people know, and they can respond faster."



CRISIS GO

Starting Conversations That Matter

Brandon and his team didn't want CrisisGo to feel like just another app. They wanted it to reshape how people talked about safety. Rather than hold formal presentations, they began by simply hanging up SRP (Standard Response Protocol) and SRM (Standard Reunification Method) posters in the school. "Kids are naturally curious. They started asking, 'What does this mean?' And that allowed for organic, casual conversations to begin."

This grassroots awareness-building is part of a broader vision. "We want a shared language around safety. Staff already know it. Students are learning it. Next up is our parents and community."

To support this, the district's principals are preparing to include SRP and SRM language in their weekly newsletters to families. "We've had to go into soft lockdowns for medical reasons before. But when people hear 'lockdown,' they panic. Common terminology helps prevent that. It brings transparency without triggering fear."

A Recognition of Progress, A Drive for More

Achieving CrisisGo's Silver Tier recognition isn't the finish line for New Berlin—it's a mile marker. "It means we're being recognized for the hard work we've already done," Brandon says. "But we're not satisfied. We want to go for gold. It's about promoting who we are and showing what we're doing."

That ambition is matched by a grounded understanding of what it takes. "You have to be honest about where you are. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Anyone can go out and buy metal detectors or cameras—but if you don't know what you need, you're just throwing money at the problem."

He's adamant: "Take inventory. Ask: What can we fix with no money? What can we fix with a little money? Then make sure it always comes back to two things: student and staff safety, and accountability."

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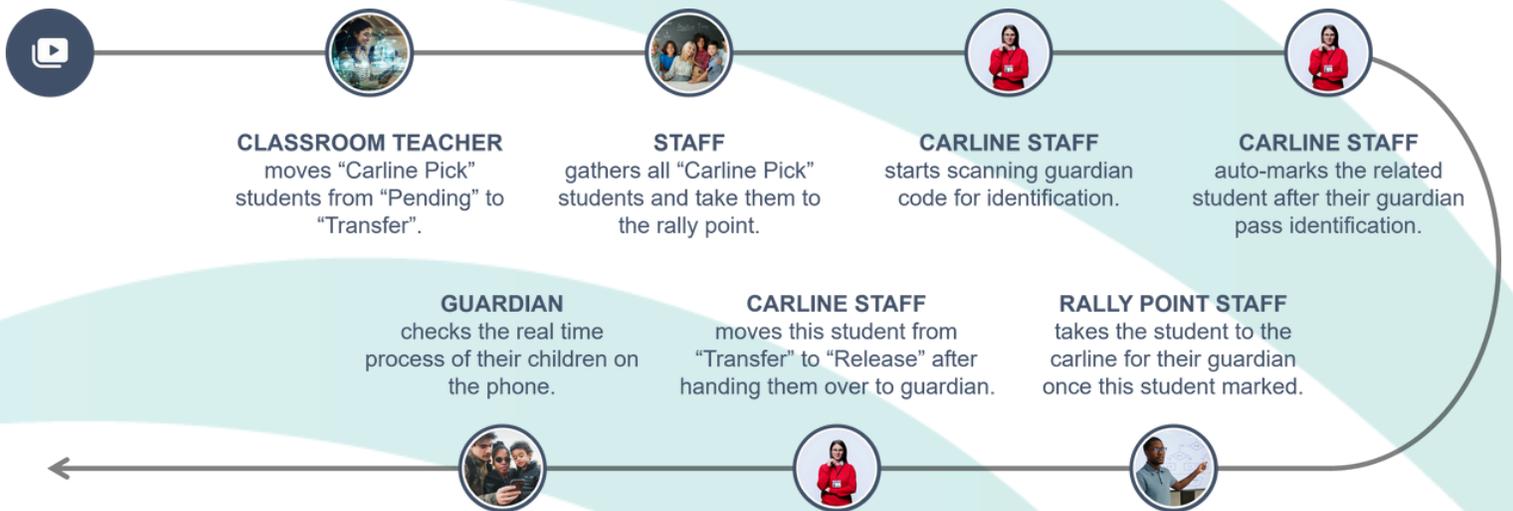


What's Next?

Looking ahead, the district plans to roll out CrisisGo's Safe Dismissal tool to manage the chaos of elementary car lines and bus departures.

"If our elementary staff is using CrisisGo every day for dismissal, that builds fluency. So when we have to use it in an emergency, they're already comfortable." They're also exploring geofencing and GateKeeper features to better track staff who work across multiple buildings.

Through it all, Brandon emphasizes patience. "This hasn't been an overnight thing. There've been frustrations. We had issues with Wi-Fi not reaching outside during drills, so we invested in extenders. It takes time. But anything good does."



Final Thoughts

Brandon's approach to safety is holistic, deliberate, and deeply collaborative. "I believe that if students don't feel safe, they can't learn. And if teachers don't feel safe, they can't teach. This is about creating a culture where everyone feels protected and prepared."

From staff training and scenario planning to student engagement and parent communication, CrisisGo has become more than a tool for New Berlin Junior High—it's become a trusted partner in their mission to keep every staff member and student safe.

