



Empowered Response, Unified Safety

How One School District Found Peace of Mind in Moments of Crisis



MUSCATINE
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

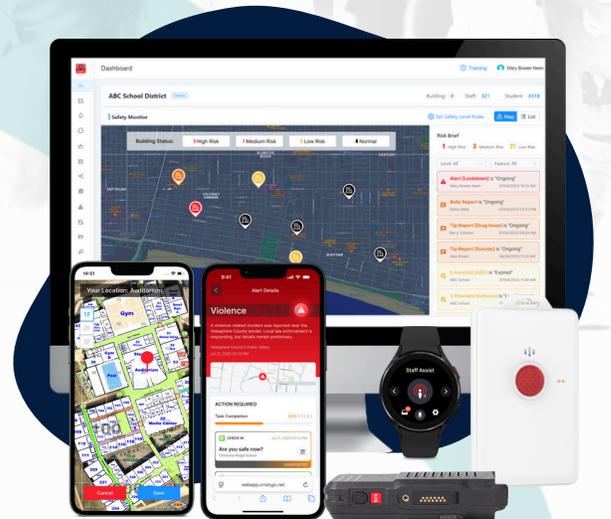
Muscatine Community School District
Muscatine, IA
Number of Students: 4,500

Background

Whitni Peña, School Resource Officer for the Muscatine Community School District, has served the Muscatine Police Department for nearly two decades and dedicated over 15 years to school safety. Her role spans across multiple campuses in the city, including seven elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, and two private elementary institutions. While stationed at Susan Clark Junior High, her reach and responsibility extend throughout the entire district.

Her commitment to student and staff safety became even more personal when a swatting incident shook her district. She responded swiftly at the high school, only to learn afterward that a nearby elementary school—just half a football field away—had been left in the dark, unaware of the threat unfolding so close to them.

"I realized in that incident," Whitni reflected, "I'm not that person. I'm not the person that should be putting them on lockdown because I'm trying to handle the incident."



Leadership-Driven Change

Fortunately, foundational support for a more advanced safety system was already in motion. The district's superintendent, who had previously worked in Minnesota, brought experience with a digital safety platform—CrisisGo.

"He was already kind of familiar with CrisisGo," Whitney explained. "So he kind of brought that to us."

It wasn't until the Governor of Iowa released funding specifically for school safety that the district was able to prioritize the investment. With infrastructure like cameras, keyless entry, and intruder locks already in place, CrisisGo became the obvious next step.

"We knew this was something that was going to be a high priority for us."

Real-Time Communication That Works

While lockdown automation and alert systems were compelling, it was the real-time communication features that sold Whitney on CrisisGo.

"I like to empower people to help themselves. I'm not going to be there all the time," she said. "Being able to inform the staff while it's happening or giving real-time updates is always the key to a successful event."

She stressed that reliance on traditional systems like intercom announcements was flawed. Staff might not be near a phone or intercom when seconds matter. CrisisGo's in-app messaging and texting provides instant access to updates, even for staff in remote parts of a building like a gym or music room.



CRISIS GO

Every Drill, Every Student, Every Time

Muscatine conducts a full range of required drills: four fire, four tornado, and two active incident drills per school year. Since the start of the academic year, all drills across all buildings are now executed using CrisisGo—and every one includes a roster event for attendance.

“We’ve already been full force since September,” Whitney said. “Each building should have around 10 [drills]. Every one of our drills also has a roster event.”

The move to digital roll calls wasn't without its learning curve. Some teachers weren't aware they could practice roster events without initiating a full alert. But that changed with targeted training. During safety presentations, Whitney often asks teachers to mentally place themselves at a specific time and simulate an attendance check using the CrisisGo app. Another major benefit? Integration with the district's student information system.

“Since we use PowerSchool, it just syncs with that,” she said. “Every day, our rosters are being updated. That’s also a great feature.”



Inclusivity for All Staff—Even Substitutes

A practical challenge that surfaced early on was how to include substitute teachers in the system. Substitutes needed access to digital rosters, but they were often left out of tech onboarding processes.

Whitni worked with the CrisisGo team to develop a solution: a dedicated “sub group.” “Our subs, when they go in, they can scan the code in the office. They’re entered into that school and then they’re kicked out at the end of the day,” she explained. She’s now encouraging staff to help substitutes navigate the app. “Just pull that sub over, go onto your roster event, click who they’re subbing for—all the kids pop up. So that’s been really great.”



Powerful Features, Still Being Discovered

Through her participation in CrisisGo's Safety Innovation Program, Whitney is uncovering new features that enhance district-wide preparedness. Two standouts are:

Geofencing

With staff and support personnel frequently traveling between buildings, geofencing ensures alerts and drill participation are tied to actual physical location, not just roster assignment.

Auto-Roster Events

Previously, initiating a drill required multiple steps—launching a drill and then separately launching a roster event. Now, it's automatic.

"I love that feature... the roster sets the event for them."

These automations ease the burden on principals and ensure consistent participation district-wide.

A Broader Vision for Safety

The district is already seeing interest in expanding CrisisGo beyond school buildings. Local law enforcement, fire, dispatch, and nearby businesses have expressed curiosity about integrating with the system, especially those in close proximity to schools.

"We've had a couple of businesses reach out... asking, 'Is there a way we could be alerted?'"

Whitni plans to work with the CrisisGo team to form a dedicated law enforcement group, allowing for tighter communication and coordination in real emergencies.



Support That Feels Personal

Behind the technology, Whitney has found a responsive partner in the CrisisGo team—especially her frequent contact with her account manager.

“If I don’t have an email back in like 20 minutes, I’m like, ‘What’s he doing? Why is he not emailing me back?’” she joked. “If he doesn’t have the answer, he usually has someone on his team who does. That’s been great.”

The Meaning Behind Silver Tier

Achieving Silver Tier recognition means more than hitting benchmarks—it symbolizes a district that’s taken safety seriously and is building systems that empower staff, not overwhelm them.

“You never know if you’re going to be one of those people that fights, flights, or freezes,” Whitney said. “But just having [CrisisGo], being able to read other people’s messages... it helps. You might decide to barricade, but then the text thread says the threat is by the gym, and now you know you can get out.”

That type of real-time intel can mean the difference between chaos and clarity.

Looking Ahead

Next steps include:

- Deepening her understanding of the CrisisGo dashboard and backend tools
- Fully formalizing substitute usage protocols
- Building out community partnerships with local emergency responders

“There’s just so much with CrisisGo that I don’t know... that would make our life easier.”



Advice to Other Districts

For districts considering a move toward safer, smarter solutions, Whitney has clear advice: “Just reach out and let them help you build whatever plan is right for your district. You might be a district of 200 kids with three buildings—you’re not going to be on the same plan as us.”

She also encourages leaders to engage their communities in funding efforts. “If you can sell that, ‘Hey, we need \$5,000 to get this system up and running,’ there are people who will invest in that. Because if something like this ever happens... it crushes your whole community.”

Final Thoughts

For Whitney Peña and Muscatine Community School District, CrisisGo is more than software—it’s peace of mind. From swatting response to drill integration, from substitute access to law enforcement partnerships, the district’s transformation has been nothing short of empowering.

“It’s providing a sense of just... relief.”

