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Case study



# Hemet Unified School District Becomes a Trailblazer for School Security in California with Evolv

# Hemet Unified School District

**LOCATION:** Hemet, California

**K-12 STUDENTS:** Approximately 22,000

**SCHOOLS:** 26 (11 Elementary Schools, 2 Elementary/Middle Schools, 4 Middle Schools, 4 High Schools, 1 Continuation High School, 2 Middle/High Schools, Science-based Charter School, and Adult Education Center)

**WEBSITE:** [www.hemetusd.org](http://www.hemetusd.org)

## Solution Snapshot

### Goals

- Reduce long lines of students waiting outside schools to pass through security screening
- Minimize nuisance alarm rate
- Engage with a security vendor that is transparent and exhibits a high degree of integrity
- Avoid students being tardy for their first period of classes
- Help create a safer school environment that facilitates learning
- Provide an opportunity for security staff for positive face-to-face interactions as students pass through security screening
- Minimize bias during security screening

### Solution

#### People

- Delivered onsite training to the security team during installation and deployment
- Evolv Customer Success Manager trained Security Coordinator on how to use Evolv Insights® analytics

#### Process

- Evolv Solutions Engineering oversaw delivery and configuration and logistics for 11 different Evolv Express® systems
- Worked with HUSD Security Director to modify ConOps to align with new security screening processes

#### Technology

- 8 Evolv Express Single-lane Systems
- 3 Evolv Express Dual-lane Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI®
- Evolv Insights

## Outcomes



**Reduced** lengthy security lines due to inefficiencies of walkthrough metal detectors



**Reduced** intrusive secondary security screening process



**Dramatically lessened** nuisance alarm rate connected to metal detectors



**Ensured** safety is not sacrificed for experience



**Avoided** security screening delays that resulted in students being tardy for first-period classes



**Helped** create a safer environment for students, teachers, administrators, and staff



# Hemet Unified School District Forms Official Security Department to Address School Safety

Hemet Unified School District (HUSD) in southern California has over 22,000 students spread across 26 different school sites

When Dr. Christi Barrett was selected as Superintendent of HUSD in 2016, one of the first things she did was to form an official Security Department.

“This was just one of a number of security initiatives we have launched,” she explains. “The culture at Hemet is one where students are always at the center,” Barrett says. “Our schools must first and foremost be safe. **If a child doesn't feel safe and their families don't feel they are safe, then the work of learning does not happen.** Safety is a foremost priority for the district. I will always do what I believe to be in the best interest of our students and staff. Why wouldn't we act to be proactive in preventing a potential tragedy from happening in one of our schools?”

“ Our teachers and staff were very happy when we put Evolv in our schools. They know we're now checking everyone who enters a school, and they feel our campuses are much safer. This enables our teachers to focus on teaching rather than worrying about potential threats coming onto the campuses.”

- Lyle Radford, Director of District Security, HUSD



## Metal Detectors Created Long Lines and Tardy Attendance

**A few years ago, HUSD implemented walkthrough metal detectors at its 11 secondary schools.**

“We wanted to be proactive in how we screen anyone entering our schools,” she conveys. “But we had a lot of challenges with the metal detectors. The rate and pace at which students could come into the building weren’t manageable due to the volume and compressed timeline of students, staff, and visitors entering our schools each morning.”

Lyle Radford, the Director of District Security at HUSD, found the metal detectors simply couldn’t meet the district’s requirements. “They were labor intensive to manage,” he says. “But worse, they created long lines outside of our schools. Students were tardy to first period. Students, parents, and teachers were complaining, and we had to stop using them every day and use them on certain days and events or only screen a portion of the students on a particular day. This was not a compromise we wanted to make.”

Jason Luna, the Assistant Principal at West Valley High School, notes, instead of using security screening, security staff at West Valley reverted to “stopping every tenth student who entered the school each morning. We had to compromise security over experience. It should not be a situation of one or the other but rather both.”

The problem with metal detectors wasn’t confined to the security screening at the beginning of the school day. “We used the metal detectors at our eighth-grade promotion ceremony last year,” recalls Andrew Holmes, Principal at Diamond Valley Middle School. “Everyone had to empty their pockets and all their belongings before stepping through the metal detectors. Of course, anyone who still had metal on their body or bag set off an alarm. It was very time-consuming and aggravating for attendees.”

“**Evolv brings equity to security screening. Students no longer feel targeted when they set off an alarm. Evolv is less invasive than metal detectors and much less time-consuming in terms of screening**”

- Andrew Holmes, Principal, Diamond Valley Middle School





## Security Bias Was a Concern with Metal Detectors

Security bias was a concern with the metal detectors for both students and parents.

A big part of the problem was the lack of context with the metal detector alarms. “We had to ask students—and for that matter anyone who set off an alarm—to remove everything from their pockets and bag,” Radford says. “We had no idea where the potential threat was located, and the entire process created friction between the security team and students.”

Luna concurs, noting that security screening with metal detectors was perceived as subjective. “Students felt they were being targeted,” he says. “Many of the items that set off alarms were ordinary things and posed no threat at all.”

Knowing this wasn’t a scalable solution, Radford and Barrett embarked on a search for a different security screening approach. “We needed a technology that was transformative,” Radford says. When he received an email from Evolv promoting the Evolv Express® system in the summer of 2022, his interest was immediate. “I really liked the free-flow experience and thought that it was exactly what we needed here at Hemet,” he says.

“ Students no longer feel targeted when they set off an alarm. Evolv is less invasive than metal detectors and much less time-consuming in terms of screening. Metal detectors look for anything with metal. Evolv looks for weapons. Most students walk through the Evolv screening lane and keep on walking to their classroom. It’s a seamless process.”

- Andrew Holmes, Principal, Diamond Valley Middle School





## Hands-on Testing at a Workshop Sells Evolv

Initially, Radford watched some videos on the Evolv system and, after conducting his research, he reached out to Evolv for discussions.

When one of HUSD's technology vendors set up an Evolv Express system in Anaheim for a K – 12 workshop, he and several other administrators signed up. "We were able to get hands-on experience with the Express system," he says. "We tested it with different firearms, and it went off every time. And while we were pleased with the results on the large knives we passed through the system, the Evolv team was very transparent from the very start about the limitations of their current technology to detect smaller knives. This level of integrity impressed us."

Radford brought the team's findings back to Barrett and the school board with a recommendation to purchase. "We were looking for a security screening solution that would enable students to feel fully confident in their safety so they could concentrate on learning," Radford says. "Evolv did exactly that. If you don't have a foundation of safety in place, then learning is going to be exponentially more difficult."

Evolv's ability to integrate with existing HUSD security investments through its open application programming interface (API) and partnerships also played into consideration. "Evolv wasn't a random choice," Barrett notes. "It complemented the other work being done here in the district." Thus, when the decision to acquire Evolv Express systems was announced to HUSD teachers and staff, there was no pushback. "There was genuine excitement from staff and students reached out to show their gratitude for the decision," Barrett relates.



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- Lyle Radford, Director of District Security, HUSD



# Coordinating Logistics for Delivery and Configuration of 11 Systems at 11 Locations

As a starting point, HUSD elected to purchase a total of 11 Evolv Express® systems, one at each of the district's 11 secondary schools.

In advance of the deployment, Radford's team worked alongside the Evolv Solutions Engineer and Customer Success Manager to schedule the delivery of each system and to determine the configuration at each location.

Evolv also coordinated with HUSD to update the district's ConOps (Concept of Operations) to reflect new workflows and operating procedures for the Express systems at each school. Because of student enrollment and higher traffic flow, dual-lane Express systems were allocated to West Valley High School, Tahquitz High School, and Hemet High School. The remaining eight middle schools and high schools received single-lane Express systems.

"The logistics of coordinating delivery and initial configuration across all 11 schools could have gotten complex," Radford relates. "But that never occurred. The Evolv team coordinated and communicated closely with our team to ensure it was successful."



“

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- Lyle Radford, Director of District Security, HUSD

## Communication with All Members of the Districts Ecosystem Was Key to Success

**“HUSD wants people to know we care about the safety of our students and that we’re doing things to ensure they can focus on learning,” Holmes says.**

“We constantly communicate with students, talking to them, developing and building relationships, checking to see how they are doing. This includes bringing in parents and talking with them about what we are doing.”

With that in mind, HUSD made sure parents, staff, faculty, and students knew the Evolv systems were coming and what to expect when they were deployed. “Christi [Barrett] and Lyle [Radford] did a really good job planning and then communicating why we were adding Evolv,” notes Jennifer Martinez, the Assistant Principal at Diamond Valley Middle School. “Administrators and teachers had a chance to ask questions and learn about the technology before it was deployed.”

One of the communication tools HUSD tapped was a video detailing what the Express is, how it works, and how it would impact students daily. “We wanted to ensure everyone understood why we were implementing them and how they operate,” Barrett says. “We put a lot of time and effort into the video, wanting to ensure we achieved rapid adoption out of the gate.” [This video](#) was shared with the entire HUSD community and made available on the district’s YouTube channel, garnering over 3.5k views since its launch.

“ I expected [students] to be frustrated. I expected them to ask a million questions. But surprisingly, none of them complained about the Evolv deployment. They actually enjoy the experience and tell me they feel safer.”

- Ana Rose Navarro, Campus Supervisor, HUSD







## Training, Go Live, and the Chromebook Pass-around Method

When it came time for implementation support, the Evolv team was there for Radford.

“This was a sizable project,” he notes. “We had to train our security team on the new technology and plan the logistics to go live with each of the 11 different systems. Just as Evolv did with the delivery and configuration logistics, Evolv took all the work out of training our staff and then going live with each system for me. They came out on-site. They showed us exactly where to deploy it and worked with the principals at each school on delivery and implementation logistics.”

The training process for his security staff was quite seamless. “The Express system is very intuitive to manage, and our security staff was able to learn both Flow Control and Threat Resolution positions very quickly,” Radford says.

To handle Chromebooks alerting when walking through the system, the Evolv team had an answer. “We implemented the pass-around method where students place their Chromebooks on a table before passing through the Express lane and retrieve it after walking through security screening,” Radford explains.

## Leveraging Analytics to Plan Staffing Requirements

Analytics from Evolv Insights® is proving useful to the Hemet USD security team.

“We look at the analytics from Evolv Insights every day,” Radford says. “It provides us with the number of students who pass through each Evolv system down to the level of five-minute increments. The analytics are valuable in helping us to adjust our staffing levels at each entrance and monitor what threats are being found.” Evolv’s Customer Success Manager worked with Radford’s Security team to train them on Evolv Insights and how to use the reports. He continues to provide consultative guidance to them.

“Being the first school in California to go live with Evolv is something that we’re proud of. We don’t want our schools to feel like jails or prisons, and Evolv was the perfect choice.”

- Christi Barrett, Ph.D.,  
Superintendent, HUSD



## Collaborative Relationship with Evolv

**Barrett, Radford, and different school principals and administrators have found the relationship with Evolv to be unique and refreshing.**

“I’ve had a chance to work with different members of the Evolv team, and every time they have been very respectful and helpful,” Holmes says. “One of the aspects about Evolv that we really like is the fact that the team welcomes feedback and ideas.”

“I have a unique relationship with Evolv,” Radford adds. “They have been there every step of the way, even after everything was purchased and deployed. Evolv listens to us and is always there in the event we run into a question or problem. They want to improve their processes and are constantly asking me, ‘What can we do to help you?’ How else can we support you?’ This personalized approach is unique in the market and a real differentiator.”

Radford was particularly impressed when he met Evolv’s Chief Executive Officer Peter George at an event. “He spoke with me for about 15 minutes and had actually read my feedback in a Voice of the Customer Survey response I had provided. He had several questions for me based on what I had submitted. I cannot think of a company that has shown as much integrity as Evolv. They are always there for us and looking for ways to help us.”



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- Lyle Radford, Director of District Security, HUSD



## Making Students Feel Welcome at the Start of the School Day

Luna notes that he didn't fully appreciate the benefits of greeting students at the beginning of the school day until Evolv.

"That initial contact every day means a lot to the kids," he describes. Holmes feels likewise when it comes to Evolv facilitating positive interactions between staff and students. "Evolv helps students to feel welcome when they arrive at school," he says. "Being able to engage with them in dialogue at the beginning of each day, which was difficult to do with the metal detectors, conveys that we are concerned about their wellbeing."

The positive interactions, paired with Evolv's tablet display features, also allowed for smoother secondary screening checks. "Evolv makes the secondary security check very easy," Radford says. "The red box on the Evolv tablet shows the security guards in the Flow Control and Threat Resolution positions precisely where the threat is located. We know exactly where to search and can ignore all other areas on the person and their bag. Students feel far less invaded in their privacy when they walk through an Express lane versus our legacy metal detectors. They know we are only interested in finding bad things and ignore all items that pose no threat."

Holmes adds, "Physical and psychological safety are both very important. **When students feel safe, it is easier for them to perform academically at their highest level.**"

In addition, unlike the metal detectors that created concerns about biases, the Evolv systems have had the exact opposite effect. "Evolv ignores simple items and only focuses on things that could be a threat," Radford explains. "We have a very free-flowing experience with Evolv, which we did not have with the metal detectors."

"Evolv brings equity to security screening," Holmes adds. "Students no longer feel targeted when they set off an alarm. Evolv is less invasive than metal detectors and much less time-consuming in terms of screening. Metal detectors look for anything with metal. Evolv looks for weapons. Most students walk through the Evolv screening lane and keep on walking to their classroom. It's a seamless process."

And when an alarm does occur, students understand the secondary screening check is just part of the process. "Knowing my students and staff are safe makes me sleep better at night," Luna says. "We don't need to compromise security over experience with Evolv."



**[In the past] we had to compromise security over experience. It should not be a situation of one or the other but rather both."**

- Jason Luna, Assistant Principal, West Valley High School



## First Impressions of Evolv on Go Live

Even though Radford and others had spent significant time researching and vetting the Evolv technology, he admits that he was a bit apprehensive on the first day they went live with Evolv.

"I was worried and didn't know how the students would respond," he says. "This all disappeared when I saw the reaction of the staff and students. All these anxieties melted away after that first day. I was very impressed at how fast and easy it was to get onto the campus."

Barrett felt a sense of pride and relief. "I knew that our proactive actions made our schools safer," she says. "I was very proud of the entire team for their efforts to ensure the deployment was a success."

Likewise, Ana Rose Navarro, the Campus Supervisor at HUSD, thought students would be frustrated with the Evolv systems at first but discovered she was wrong. "I expected them to be frustrated," she says. "I expected them to ask a million questions. But surprisingly, none of them complained about the Evolv deployment. They actually enjoy the experience and tell me they feel safer."

## Now Students Feel Evolv Is Part of Their Daily Routine

The response of students has been very positive.

They went from waiting in security to walking right into their schools with Evolv. "Students definitely understand why we have the Express systems and have responded very positively to them," Holmes says. "They feel safer with them in place. Evolv helps us put the emphasis back on why students are in the first place—to learn."

Luna adds, "We want students to come to school and not worry about other things that are going on in the world. Evolv accomplished exactly that."

Martinez continues by explaining that Evolv acts as a deterrent as well. "Students know that we have put something in place to protect them," she says. "As a result, I'm finding they are making better choices—in terms of what they bring to school and how they act."





## Parents and Caregivers Appreciate Enhanced Safety for Their Children

Like the students, parents and caregivers also responded very positively to Evolv.

“When we first pushed out the Express system, we got some very nice messages from our parents letting us know that they were very pleased with the decision to add them and felt their children are safer,” Holmes relates.

“Parents entrust us with the safety of their children, and safeguarding this trust is paramount,” Holmes adds. “I have four kids in the Hemet school system, and I was very pleased as a parent when I heard we were rolling out the Evolv Express systems in our schools.”



It breaks my heart that we live in an age where students can go to school and feel unsafe. Not all our students come from safe homes. But we want our schools to be a safe environment for them. Plus, as we know, if a child feels safe, then they are going to be much more likely to learn and achieve academic success.”

- Jennifer Martinez, Assist. Principal, Diamond Valley Middle School



## Safety Concerns of Teachers and Staff Put at Ease

Teachers and staff are just as enthusiastic about Evolv as students and parents.

“They feel safer with Evolv knowing there are no weapons on our students,” Martinez says. “As part of our deployment, we modeled the security screening for teachers and staff and showed them how Evolv works.”

Holmes continues, “Teachers and staff appreciate the fact that we’re taking extra measures to keep them safe. Evolv makes our school safer and puts our minds at greater ease. We’re continuously looking for ways to improve our safety and Evolv definitely helps us do so.”

Luna explains that it is difficult to put all of your energy and attention into delivering a lesson when you’re worried about the potential of a weapon being used in your school. “Evolv enables our teachers to get back to the core of their jobs and just teach,” he states.

## Words and Actions Matter

Barrett explains the transition to Evolv was seamless, and there has been tremendous gratitude from students, staff, teachers, parents, and community members who feel Evolv helps make HUSD schools safer.

“Evolv means business when it comes to safety,” Martinez sums up. “It’s not just words on the page. Their actions demonstrate their commitment is real.”

““ Our relationship with Evolv has been nothing but wonderful. The relationship is genuine and the customer service has been excellent.”

- Christi Barrett, Ph.D., Superintendent, HUSD







# What do HUSD Students Have to Say about Evolv?

"I feel like the school is really invested in our safety. Knowing that we have technology like some of the most famous ballparks and football stadiums makes me feel extra safe. This is really important because some of the kids have anxiety, and knowing they are secure and safe is important."

- Madison, 9th Grade, HUSD



"I like having Evolv at our school because it helps create a safe environment for learning. I like going to school every day because I feel comfortable."

- Adrian, 7th Grade Student, HUSD



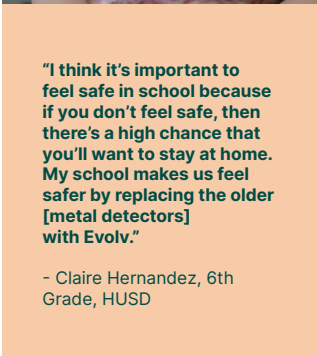
"I like Evolv because it makes me feel safe, knowing that no one can bring a weapon into the school. I feel my school really cares about the safety of the students."

- Angie, 9th Grade, HUSD



"Weapons screening is a preventative measure and an extra step to ensure the safety of students. Evolv helps deter students from bringing weapons onto campus and makes students feel safer."

- Caitlin, 12th Grade, HUSD



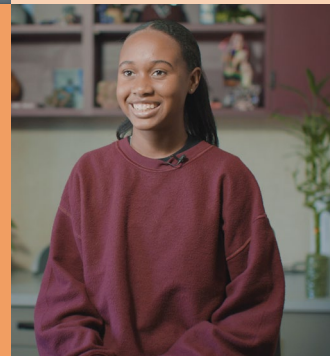
"I think it's important to feel safe in school because if you don't feel safe, then there's a high chance that you'll want to stay at home. My school makes us feel safer by replacing the older [metal detectors] with Evolv."

- Claire Hernandez, 6th Grade, HUSD



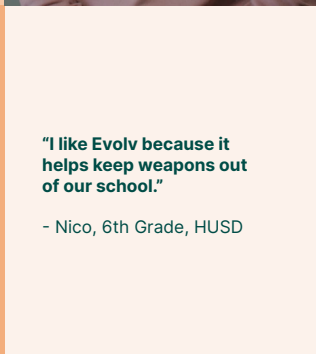
"Going through security screening isn't a big hassle now. I feel safer coming to school now that Evolv is in place."

- Isabella, 7th Grade, HUSD



"Being safe at school means I am protected and have a safe space. I do have a big fear of school shootings and I am glad security is working to ensure no one is coming on campus with a weapon makes me feel safer."

- Julissa, 9th Grade, HUSD



"I like Evolv because it helps keep weapons out of our school."

- Nico, 6th Grade, HUSD



"I do think that my principal and everyone else in the school cares about my safety. The school is doing everything they can to make us feel safer."

- Ainsley, 8th Grade, HUSD

Contact us to learn more about helping to create safer zones where you live, learn, work or play.

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