

Franklin High School initiated a method of attendance record keeping known as “The Swipe System” to begin the ’09-’10 school year. This new method of attendance was initially met with mixed emotions but is likely here to stay because of its efficiency and practicality.

“It’s inconvenient to dig through your bag every morning just to swipe it,” said Sara Nachman. But Franklin cares more about safety than convenience. Administration officials like assistant principal Mr. Flam speak favorably of the system, after he and Mrs. Reid took a trip to Perry Hall High School to see the system already in place there. They enthusiastically recommended it for our school.

“We saw it, we liked it, we loved it,” said Mr. Flam.

The swipe system is spreading across Baltimore County. The intention is to help raise attendance, stop tardiness, and make schools safer. An I.D card is swiped through a swiping station located at the main office. After the student swipes in, a picture, along with student information and time of swipe, appears on a small computer screen. If the student is absent, an e-mail will be sent to his or her parents. If the absence is not justified within 24 hours or the next time the student swipes in, an alarm will go off.

The program also allows parents to be notified about their child’s whereabouts. They can sign up for a daily email, informing them where their child has been, or if their child has shown up to class at all.

Even with an initial delay in the system because of confusion on how to use the cards, two hundred parents had already registered within the first week of school, and the numbers are increasing daily.

Franklin High School is working with Lifetouch to take student pictures earlier this year so students can have photo I D’s. Current ninth graders will have new photos while upperclassmen ID’s have photos from last year’s yearbook. Each card has a barcode with added information for other uses.

“It’s not just one of those things you take and say I have my picture, and then just put it somewhere and never use it again,” said Mr. Flam.

The administration is supplying students with other useful tools. For instance, agenda books will serve as hall passes and also have a barcode strip and a picture for identification. The smaller, more compact agendas aren’t just for writing homework assignments in anymore.

“Now they have to have it, so they might as well use it,” said Mr. Flam.

If students choose to throw away or lose their agendas, they are expected to buy a new one from the school book store for \$3.

Will the new ID’s keep Franklin safer? Will it help the schools attendance? Only time will tell.