

Case Study

Canyons School District

PROFILE:

COUNTRY: USA

INDUSTRY: Education

SIZE: 33,000 students

OBJECTIVE:

Canyons School District was using another web filter but was unhappy with its poor decryption and reporting capabilities.

SOLUTION:

In ContentKeeper, the district has found a solution that can seamlessly decrypt and inspect SSL-encrypted web traffic at very high speeds, regardless of what type of device students are using.

RESULTS:

Canyons School District now has greater visibility into students' web use. District officials also get real-time alerts when student searches indicate potentially harmful behavior to themselves or others. This feature has helped parents feel more secure as learning has shifted online during the pandemic — and it might even have averted tragedy in some cases.



ContentKeeper Helps Make Remote Learning Safer for Students — and Possibly Saves Lives

When Utah's Canyons School District switched to ContentKeeper for its web filtering solution, district officials hoped for better reporting capabilities and SSL decryption. They never imagined that a global pandemic would force them to shift on a dime to remote learning.

Fortunately, ContentKeeper helped district IT staff quickly and easily configure mobile devices for students to take home, so they would be protected while they worked remotely. What's more, ContentKeeper's superior reporting has helped the district realize a learning return on its IT investment — and might even have averted a tragedy in some cases.

A difference of 'night and day'

With 33,000 students across 55 locations, Canyons School District has been adding many Chromebooks over the years and will be piloting a 1:1 computing program in its secondary schools for the 2020-21 academic year. The district had been using another web filtering solution but was unhappy with its decryption and reporting capabilities, says Director of Technology Engineering Dave Heywood.

"Our old solution didn't satisfy the reporting we needed, and the decryption was cumbersome. It took a long time to run reports, if they even succeeded at all," he says.

Because this legacy software struggled to decrypt and inspect SSL web traffic at scale, it couldn't produce detailed reports about the specific web pages students were trying to access — or the search terms they were typing into Google. "We decided it wasn't working for us," Heywood says.

In ContentKeeper, the district has found a solution that can seamlessly decrypt and inspect SSL-encrypted web traffic at very high speeds, regardless of what type of device students are using. The solution was simple to roll out and administer, and the support has been phenomenal.

"ContentKeeper was very easy to configure and set up. Their engineers have been very responsive any time we've had a question," Heywood observes. "And the decryption takes just a fraction of the time." As a result, Canyons School District now has accurate, responsive reports that are extremely useful to administrators. Heywood described the difference as "night and day."

Supporting remote learning

ContentKeeper's value was confirmed when the coronavirus pandemic forced students to learn from home.

"When we invested in ContentKeeper initially, our policy was that we wouldn't send devices home," Heywood says. "Very quickly, however, we were in a position where we needed to get technology into the hands of kids who didn't have access."

“Within a matter of hours, we were sending students home with devices that were fully filtered with SSL decryption, so we could see what they were doing as they typed in searches from home. We’ve worked with several companies, and I would say the support we have received from ContentKeeper is among the best we’ve had. We really are impressed with the product.”

—Dave Heywood
Director of Technology Engineering

District leaders chose to deploy several thousand of the Chromebooks that resided in their schools to students, so students could learn from home uninterrupted.

“ContentKeeper was very responsive. It was amazing how quickly they worked with our team,” Heywood recalls. “Their engineers helped us get things configured. Within a matter of hours, we were sending students home with devices that were fully filtered with SSL decryption, so we could see what they were doing as they typed in searches from home.”

Not only were district officials getting daily keyword reports showing inappropriate searches, but they also received real-time alerts whenever a student searched for information suggesting they might harm themselves or others.

This keyword inspection and real-time alerting feature helped allay parents’ concerns about sending devices home with younger students. It might even have prevented a catastrophe.

“Within minutes, we were able to learn of a few situations that required possible intervention,” Heywood says, referring to students whose web searches indicated they might be thinking of suicide. “We were able to help some students through a crisis, and maybe even save their lives.”

Justifying edtech investment

An unexpected benefit of using ContentKeeper has been the insight that Heywood and his team have received about how often students were using their district issued Chromebooks from home.

“We can see how long students have been on their device,” he says. “This helps us justify the investment of sending Chromebooks home with students, and we can also identify students who haven’t been logging on as frequently as we’d like. As we evaluate that, leaders can determine how they might reach out to parents and engage those students more deeply in their education.”

Another thing that Heywood really appreciates is how responsive ContentKeeper is to customers. “They are listening to our feedback and trying to improve the product,” he explains. For instance, in talking with ContentKeeper engineers, Heywood mentioned that tighter integration with Microsoft Active Directory would enable the district to associate a student who’s learning from home with his or her school more easily, so IT staff can report on that student’s web activity directly to his or her principal without having to do any extra work. This feature has been developed and will be deployed in the next release.

“We’ve worked with several companies, and I would say the support we have received from ContentKeeper is among the best we’ve had,” Heywood says. He concludes: “We really are impressed with the product.”

