

Case Study

Derry Township School District

PROFILE:

COUNTRY: USA
INDUSTRY: Education
SIZE: 3,400 Students

KEY REQUIREMENTS:

- Better visibility into student web use
- More flexible control over website access
- The ability to manage student-owned devices in a BYOD environment

MAIN BENEFITS:

- Very granular web filtering and policy control
- Improved reporting, even for internet use on student-owned devices
- Highly responsive vendor technical support with same-day resolution

ContentKeeper Helps Secure Student Devices in a BYOD Environment

OBJECTIVE

Pennsylvania's Derry Township School District wanted an internet filtering system that would give administrators better insight into how students were using online resources, as well as more granular control over their website access. District IT leaders also required a solution that would enable them to monitor and control internet activity on the personal devices that students brought to school as part of a "bring your own device" (BYOD) initiative.

SOLUTION

Derry Township convinced its Intermediate Unit to switch to ContentKeeper as its internet filtering and web security system. ContentKeeper's solution gives district leaders very precise insight into, and control over, their students' use of Web 2.0 tools and social media sites in the classroom — and the district now can manage students' internet use in a BYOD environment.

Background

Like many Pennsylvania school systems, Derry Township gets its internet access from its local Intermediate Unit, which also supplies web filtering for the district. But district IT leaders weren't happy with this service.

"When I was hired two years ago, there was one flat filter for the entire district," said David Sweigert, director of infrastructure technology for Derry Township. "If you wanted to allow access to YouTube or Facebook, you had to allow it for everybody. It was an all-or-nothing situation."

This older filter also lacked the detailed reporting that Sweigert desired. So, he and his colleague, Director of Instructional Technology Traci Landry, began looking for alternatives. They discovered ContentKeeper at an educational technology conference and brought it to the attention of their IU.

"We were fully prepared to buy our own filter if they did not make the switch," Sweigert said. Fortunately, the IU's technology administrators also recognized ContentKeeper's value and quickly adopted the system.

Why Choose ContentKeeper?

No other solution on the market provides the degree of visibility and control that ContentKeeper provides.

Administrators can set policies based on specific user groups, so students at different grade levels can be given access to different types of materials. And this granularity applies to Web 2.0 and social media tools as well, letting administrators restrict access to certain types of content while allowing access to others — even within the same website domain.



DERRY TOWNSHIP
SCHOOL DISTRICT

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David Sweigert
Director of Infrastructure Technology

What’s more, ContentKeeper’s technology enables IT leaders to enforce their internet use settings on any device that connects to their network — including student-owned laptops, tablets, or smartphones brought from home. When a student connects to the school district network, ContentKeeper issues a certificate to that student’s device, allowing administrators to monitor, manage, and control that student’s web use.

Derry Township has given an iPad to every student in grades 7-8, but “we’re also a BYOD district,” Landry said. “Students, as early as the fourth grade, can bring in their devices from home at the discretion of their teacher. One of the factors that drew us to ContentKeeper was the ability to manage these student-owned devices.”

Enhanced Reporting

While the ContentKeeper internet filter is located at the IU, Derry Township administrators have online access to a centralized management console, which allows them to set and change their local filtering policies and view or download web usage reports as needed.

Sweigert called ContentKeeper’s reporting capabilities “phenomenal.” Administrators can see not just the MAC address, but also the user name associated with each online session in the reports.

“We’re able to go in and see each person’s online activity that day,” he said. “We couldn’t do that before.”

Besides tracking students’ online activity, the reports enable IT leaders to study overall web usage for each school and discern key trends, such as identifying the most popular online resources. This helps administrators plan for future needs, Sweigert said.

Greater Control

Another feature that Derry Township appreciates is the level of control that administrators now have over social media tools.

Some teachers are using tools such as Twitter to connect students to experts in the field, Landry said. “We don’t block those sites entirely, because we see the educational benefits of that,” she said. But ContentKeeper allows administrators to block certain feeds within Twitter, while keeping the rest open to students. It also lets administrators restrict access to certain grade levels, or to certain times of the day — such as when students are supervised by a teacher.

Landry recalls when Yik Yak, a social media site for spreading online gossip, first emerged — and how it led to cyber bullying among users. “Only a few days after we learned of this site, ContentKeeper gave us the ability to block it in our schools,” she said. “They’re very responsive to our needs.”

RESULT

ContentKeeper has given Derry Township School District better insight into students’ web use and more granular control of their online activity. Furthermore, these benefits apply even when students bring their own devices to school — giving district leaders peace of mind in knowing their students will be kept safe and on task in a BYOD program.