

Case Study

Lake Stevens School District

PROFILE:

COUNTRY: USA

INDUSTRY: Education

SIZE: 8,500 Students

KEY REQUIREMENTS:

- The ability to filter individual pages within SSL-encrypted websites
- The ability to apply different policies to different user groups
- A solution that would filter students' web access from home or school
- A company that was highly responsive to its customers' need

MAIN BENEFITS:

- Fast, accurate filtering with very granular control, applied wherever students log on
- The ability to use websites like YouTube and Craigslist during instruction, without compromising student safety
- Exceptional customer service and support



Greater Control First Drew Lake Stevens to ContentKeeper; Exceptional Service Sealed the Deal

When the Lake Stevens School District in Washington switched to ContentKeeper for its web filtering service, district officials gained the ability to use appropriate content from sites like YouTube and Craigslist as teaching tools, while still blocking students' access to inappropriate material. They also got a solution that applies filtering policies off campus as well, letting students take their Chromebooks home and enjoy the same safe online experience they have in the classroom.

But that's not all. With ContentKeeper, district officials also have received exceptional customer service—including responsiveness to their needs and unparalleled tech support.

Background

Located about 30 miles from Seattle, Lake Stevens supplies every student in grades 2-12 with a Chromebook for academic use—and students in grades 6-12 can take their devices home for anytime, anywhere learning.

With the district's prior filtering service, "there were times when it seemed like one policy would work against another for some reason," said Keith Welton, IT projects coordinator for the district, "so the filtering results were inconsistent. That was very troubling."

Another problem was that Lake Stevens couldn't allow different types of access for different user groups. "The other solution wouldn't allow full YouTube access for staff but restricted access for kids," he explained. "They didn't have a mechanism to do that. We had to allow access to YouTube for everybody or restrict it for everybody. There was no middle ground."

Instead of working with Welton to try to solve these issues, the company would brush them off. In fact, its tech support department even implied that Welton and his staff were to blame for the problems they experienced. "That was very disappointing to hear," he said, "especially when we take quite a bit of pride in making sure we do things according to industry standards and best practices."

Fine-Tuned Control—Both on *and* off Campus

With ContentKeeper, Lake Stevens now has a superior web filtering appliance that gives district officials much more fine-tuned control over the type of content students can access. What's more, the software's ability to enforce the district's filtering policies has been "flawless," Welton said.

Not only can Welton and his colleagues set up separate policies for various user groups, but they also can decrypt SSL traffic in order to block certain web pages or functions within YouTube, Craigslist, and other social media sites, while granting access to those that have educational value.

That means teachers can authorize specific videos for students to watch on their devices, while blocking access to the rest of YouTube. This ability also has come in handy for using Craigslist as an instructional tool.

"Our teachers who want to teach students important job skills can do that more effectively," Welton noted. "Many employers are posting their job openings on Craigslist now. But there's a lot of

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Keith Welton
IT Projects Coordinator

inappropriate content on Craigslist that should never be accessed by a minor. With ContentKeeper’s fine controls, we can allow students to access the good stuff on Craigslist, but we can block all of the personal postings and inappropriate content. That has been a huge win for us—and we have received really positive feedback from teachers about that.”

And with ContentKeeper’s mobility appliance, the district is able to apply the same filtering policies that govern students’ in-school Internet use when they take their Chromebooks home.

“When students take district Chromebooks home, they are automatically redirected through our network and the mobility appliance,” Welton said. “It was very easy to set that up using the Google management console. When students sign into Chrome with their school-issued account, they are being filtered as if they are inside the walls of their classroom. Our public puts a lot of trust in us to ensure that if students are using one of our devices, they’re going to be properly filtered.”

Excellent Customer Support

When Lake Stevens first began using ContentKeeper’s web filtering solution, the Chrome extension was fairly new, Welton said—and there was “a little bit of a delay” in how quickly the extension would apply the district’s filtering policies.

But ContentKeeper “is so responsive to feature requests and solving issues,” he continued. Now, the Chrome extension “is very fast—and it just works. It’s pretty amazing, and I’m very pleased.”

ContentKeeper isn’t just responsive to engineering requests, Welton said; its customer service is without peer in the industry.

“We actually had a situation where we had a minor DNS problem,” he related. “This was early on, as we were trying to get ContentKeeper up and running in our district. We were having some problems, and it wasn’t working quite right. We jumped on the phone with ContentKeeper and worked our way through the issue, only to learn that it was actually a DNS problem on our network. Instead of saying, ‘OK, good luck with that,’ the customer service representative stayed on the phone with us and helped us through it until things were working. Nobody else does that. In the 12 years that I’ve been involved in education technology, I’ve never dealt with anyone in tech support who has gone to those lengths—helping even when it was clear the problem wasn’t related to their software.”

RESULT

“At the end of the day, we know that no content filtering solution will catch every piece of inappropriate content on the web, so we teach our students to be good digital citizens to address these areas that a filter might not catch,” Welton said. “With that being said, ContentKeeper has been the most comprehensive product we have tested and used.”

In fact, ContentKeeper’s web filtering solution has worked so well—and the care the company has shown has been so exemplary—that Lake Stevens signed a three-year renewal as soon as its first year of service concluded.

“ContentKeeper is all about its customers’ experience,” Welton concluded, “and we look forward to continuing the relationship.”



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