To manage the school network, meet CIPA requirements, monitor AUP adherence, control bandwidth, and ensure safety and security of online users, IT departments rely on web filters. To teach and engage students and arm them with the 21st-century skills they need for success, educators turn to the web — and often get blocked by the filter.

Districts need to balance the needs of both sides.
Blocking inappropriate content doesn’t have to block learning

10 Facts About CIPA and Web Filtering

The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law passed by Congress in 2000, and updated and clarified since that time to help ensure the safety of children accessing the Internet over school and library computers. Any organizations that receive funding through E-Rate or the Universal Service Fund must certify that they are meeting the requirements of CIPA.

1. CIPA requires a web filter for schools that receive E-Rate funding.
2. CIPA requires that schools block visual depictions that are pornographic, obscene or harmful to minors.
3. CIPA requires a policy for educating users, including educating minors about appropriate online behavior and interacting with other individuals on social networking sites; a policy for internet safety; and monitoring the activity of minors.
4. CIPA requires filtering on school-owned devices. (Clarification on requirements for student-owned devices used on campuses is forthcoming from the FCC.)
5. Allowing YouTube videos is not a violation of CIPA.
6. Allowing social networking is not a violation of CIPA.
7. Schools won’t lose E-Rate funding for adjusting filtering policies to unblock appropriate sites.
8. While educator computers need to have a web filter installed, teachers and other adults don’t need to be filtered (i.e., the ability for adults to override the filter is not a CIPA violation).
9. Schools have the authority to make local decisions about filtering policies.
10. Even the FCC recognizes the necessity and benefits of teaching students to be responsible digital citizens.

Why Filter?
- Student safety
- Network security
- Identification of cyberbullying
- CIPA compliance
- Enforcement of Acceptable Use Policies
- Supervision of school resources
- Control of traffic for bandwidth purposes
- Ability to monitor mobile device usage
- Secure state testing

Challenges of Web Filtering
- Balancing security and safety with learning and education
- Meeting needs of various groups and individuals
- Ensuring over-blocking doesn’t hinder learning
- Ensuring under-blocking doesn’t impede safety and security
- Enforcing policies despite sophisticated new proxy technologies
- Providing safe access to dynamic content and collaborative tools
- Accommodating BYOD and mobile learning programs
- Filtering SSL traffic

Differentiate Policies
Teachers and students need to access different things to do their jobs. An elementary school student requires access to different sites than a high school student does. And one user who abuses online access shouldn’t lead to over-blocking across the board. Differentiated policies should allow you to set varying levels of access and different filtering policies by user type, grade, and individual.

Trust Teachers
The people who work with students all day in the classroom—creating lessons, planning activities, and seeking out new resources to make learning engaging for students—can and should be trusted to access the internet and determine what students can see for a specific lesson or class. Forcing a teacher to wait several hours, days, or weeks for IT to make adjustments to filtering policies is often a hindrance to learning, not to mention a drain on IT time resources. Aside from differentiated policies for teachers, overrides and other filtering features empower teachers to give their students the best resources for learning (under the supervision of IT).

Collaborate
Although the district network has shifted from being primarily an infrastructural element to a learning tool, educators often feel left out of decisions about what content has educational benefits and what filtering policies should block and allow. Making the creation of filtering policies a collaborative effort between IT, teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and even students can ensure that all needs are met—and varied viewpoints are considered.

Be Transparent
When users understand the district’s filtering policy and specific reasons certain sites are blocked, they are generally more understanding and accepting. Also, users feel less frustrated about filtering when they are able to search a transparent database (that allows users to see how and why a site is categorized) and to recommend sites for review.

Best Practices in Filtering

Considerations When Choosing a Web Filter

Does it get education?
Districts aren’t businesses, and only a solution made for schools can properly categorize websites and implement features that promote educational goals.

Can it filter mobile devices?
Even if you don’t have a mobile learning program, chances are that you will eventually. And you probably already have students and staff bringing their own devices and using them on your network.

What does it do about dynamic content and Web 2.0?
Blocking or allowing broad content categories isn’t good enough. Schools need a way to allow the educational aspects of Web 2.0 while blocking inappropriate content.

Can you customize it?
Your district is unique and you need a filter that you can granularly control to meet your specific needs.

Do you have to customize it?
While customization is essential, so are default best practices—because extra time is one thing most IT teams don’t have.

Can it handle SSL?
Your district needs to be able to facilitate SSL traffic while keeping students protected.

Does it scale?
A filter needs to be able to efficiently manage traffic, whether you have 500 users on your network or 5,000.

What’s the authentication process?
Your filter should have seamless single sign-on so users don’t have to remember multiple usernames and passwords.

What are its reporting capabilities?
Your filter should enable you to get a high-level overview of activity across the district, and you should also be able to drill down to individual groups and students to identify misuse.

Does it have bandwidth management?
Bandwidth prioritization is essential to ensuring users on school devices have fast access.

Are there tools for teachers?
IT can’t be everywhere at once; your filter should enable teachers to share in the management while keeping IT in control.

What About SSL?

With Google's move toward using 100 percent encrypted traffic to any Google services, there is a greater focus than ever before on privacy concerns and using encrypted traffic (HTTPS). That assurance of privacy is critical, but so is the assurance of student safety. And schools still want to report on searches, and selectively allow or block Google services, while allowing secure access to educational resources.

Even though Google has moved these services to be encrypted, schools still have an option to allow them to work the way that they always have. HTTPS technology has a built-in solution for this problem: a Trusted Man in the Middle Proxy. There is no solution other than a Trusted Man in the Middle Proxy, and HTTPS is specifically designed so that no other solutions can be developed.
The Lightspeed Systems Solution

It’s time to rethink web filtering for schools. As much as a web filter needs to block inappropriate content, it also needs to allow education. This means access to tools and resources that can make learning engaging and real.

The Filter includes:
- Web Filtering
- Mobile Filtering
- Advanced Reporting

What’s in it for IT?
- CIPA compliance
- Transparent education-specific database
- Web traffic prioritization
- Easy management
- Granular reporting on activity
- Virus scanning
- Authenticated user access
- Differentiated policies
- Cross-platform desktop and mobile support
- Unlimited hosted file storage
- Hosted or on-site solution
- Robust SSL decryption

What’s in it for educators?
- Differentiated access
- Ability to create overrides
- Creation of Web Zones for testing
- Reporting on activity during online tests
- Access to videos and other often-blocked resources
- Easy access to Web Zones and overrides in Teacher Dashboard
- Campus Library for easy sharing of educational YouTube videos and other resources

Find out more at: lightspeedsystems.com

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