

New Orleans Boys School Back in Business

Finding Ways to Become Even More Than Before

The Stuart Hall School for Boys, in New Orleans, has a reputation for excellence that dates back 20 years. In New Orleans, the school is one-of-a-kind: an all-boys Catholic school for boys from nursery school through seventh grade.

Today, in the year following the Katrina hurricane, the school is still dealing with the aftermath. The school is slowly getting back to normal; however, everywhere about the city, the signs of the devastating damage remain. At capacity, the school has taught as many as 330 students; however post-Katrina enrollment is hovering at around 270.

Back in Business

Despite the water, Stuart Hall was fortunate to be one of the first private schools to be back in business after the storm. The school managed to stay in contact with all of its students. As soon as the water was out, classes resumed. The school was up and running by November 7, 2005, although enrollment was sharply down. Many of the families who had evacuated couldn't return. Conversely, the school also gained a few new students from families who relocated in this relatively less damaged region of town.

New Technology – Internet Filtering

Part of recovering from Katrina included installing a new network within Stuart Hall. This also included acquiring a new Internet filtering technology—ContentProtect from ContentWatch, Inc.

“We’ve always needed an Internet filter,” says Bob Krieger, Director of Technology for the school. “Being a Catholic school, especially, it’s something that’s always required.”

When Krieger joined the school in 2003, however, the filtering software the school was using was a constant source of frustration and grief. The process of protecting the computers required a physical set-up process on every machine. Furthermore, the process of scanning made the computers so unbearably slow that it would take several minutes for the Internet browser to load.

Even worse, once the program appeared it would block valuable and necessary websites—such as some of the BBC sites the school values for its educational content and educational games—because somewhere on one of the BBC sites was chat room.

“The old program was so limiting and so frustrating, I actually took it off all of the machines in our lab,” Krieger says. “For quite a while, we got through by implementing a rule that the students couldn’t get on the lab computers unless a teacher was there.”

A Silver Lining

Because so much work needed to be done to the computer network after the storm, Krieger took the time to do some additional research. He discovered that Internet filtering technology has actually vastly improved.

Of the options he looked at, the product he selected was ContentProtect, from ContentWatch.

“This was the easiest product to set up,” Krieger notes. “And I really liked its price point, and the fact that I can individualize it by user rather than by machine.”

ContentProtect operates through a technology called “dynamic filtering” that allows the system to scan the incoming material in real time and block only the material that you’ve deemed inappropriate to come through. Administrators can allow or disallow material based on a spectrum of criteria such as “adult content,” “gambling,” “hate crimes,” “profanity” and much more.

Administrators can also customize the program by “white listing” or “black listing” acceptable and unacceptable sites rather than requiring them to pass through the scan.

Not only does the program block the objectionable material, but it sends the administrator a message letting them know what’s been attempted and even which user has made the attempt.

Currently, the school supports 90 computers in its student network. Now that ContentProtect is installed, Krieger can manage it locally or remotely from anywhere in the world.

Krieger did run into a few problems in the installation process, but is pleased to report that he received the help he needed from ContentWatch quickly.

“I was installing on a couple of machines that I ultimately needed to uninstall from to move the program over to other machines, and I realized I was running out of licenses to install,” Krieger said. “I realized I needed to figure out how to keep the program from counting my ‘uninstalls’ in the usage license. But I was really pleased when the technical support people were able to fix the problem for me with just a five minute call.”

Krieger finds it interesting to be able to see exactly what the students are trying to do. For example, when he blocked gaming sites, he could see that certain students were attempting to move from computer to computer to see if there were any machines the filtering software had missed. In another instance, the classes were assigned to write limericks and haikus. Because some of the sites about limericks include off-color language, they were blocked.

“The students were trying to access these sites innocently, as a part of their schoolwork, but it’s great to see that the software is reliably doing everything we need it to do,” Krieger said.

In all, Krieger is extremely pleased with the progress the computer lab has made in its filtering ability. Along with his fellow administrators, he pleased to be part of a school that is becoming stronger and better than ever after the storm.