

Case Study: Bibb County Public Schools

Bibb County Public Schools proactively identify students at risk for self-harm or violence using Lightspeed Systems® and Microsoft Teams®

Bibb County Public Schools

Macon, Georgia

Customer Since
2020

Students
22,000

Grades
Pre-K-12

Staff Members
4,000

Devices Used
iPads
Windows Laptops

Products Used
Lightspeed Filter™
Lightspeed Alert™

With so many options for online activity—social media, online docs, email, YouTube, apps, browsers, search engines, and more—school districts face an enormous challenge in achieving the visibility needed to ensure student safety.

Serving 22,000 students and 4,000 staff members, Bibb County Public Schools understands the need for a comprehensive approach to not only filtering inappropriate content from online activity, but also alerting administrators of potential threats to student safety and mental health warning signs. That is why they chose Lightspeed Systems (Lightspeed), a Microsoft partner, to help bolster their incident response and intervention strategy.

During the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, Bibb County had to reimagine its approach to filtering. Before the pandemic, they provided devices to most students and allowed for BYOD; however, their transition to a hybrid at-home and on-campus school environment in response to COVID-19 accelerated the need to send devices home with every student. But the more their needs grew, the more their existing filtering solution fell short.

In a hybrid learning model, it was required for Bibb County to filter devices off-campus. They needed a solution that could support their remote devices and address the unique challenges of K-12 education.

"To be able to bring in a content filter and have it up and running in just a couple of hours is pretty incredible. With Lightspeed, you can deploy the software and spin up a dashboard in just a couple hours. That speaks volumes for how good the product is designed."

- Greg Hogan, Network and Data Security at
Bibb County Public Schools

Easy Deployment of Cloud-based Filtering

Once Bibb County decided to implement Lightspeed Filter™, an industry leading web filtering solution, implementation did not take long.

Although initially hesitant to give up the control that comes with managing hardware to move to a completely cloud-based solution, Hogan doesn't regret putting his trust in Lightspeed to filter his district's devices both on and off network.

"What is so awesome about this product is the agent just works," says Hogan. "I mean you install it, and it works. Whereas with [other filtering solutions] I've dealt with in the past, there's so much tweaking that must be done to get it to work. [I appreciate] the simplification of having something that you can deploy, and you know it is going to work. You don't have to worry about it."

Streamlined Reporting

Lightspeed solutions not only allow Hogan to make sure that his students are safe – they also make time consuming tasks like generating and sharing reports easier to manage. With a customizable reporting dashboard, drill-down capabilities, and a user-friendly interface, Hogan can easily identify harmful content, escalate important issues quickly, and return his focus to other priorities.

"Our previous solution was lacking on the reporting side and you could get lost in the dashboard, whereas Lightspeed was very good about simplifying the reporting process and simplifying everything about the content filter management," says Hogan.

Of the many reports Lightspeed provides, Hogan relies on the flagged content reports the most. With past filtering solutions, the reporting process used to be very manual for Hogan. It required him to build an email template where he could plug in screenshots of the flagged activity. With Lightspeed Filter, all he does is send a link to the administrators so they can follow up on the incident.

My reporting time has been cut drastically," adds Hogan. "It has made my job tremendously easier in that it has cut down on a lot of the legwork I have to do to get information out to those that need it. I'm handling [content filtering] for the entire district, which speaks volumes for the product. I can manage thousands of students and staff easily and still do all of the other things I need to do."

"With distance learning, you have to be able to filter off-network or you can't send devices home. We needed a content filter that was focused on K-12 and the needs of K-12 because they're very, very different from a Fortune 500 company."

- Greg Hogan, Network and Data Security at
Bibb County Public Schools

Self-harm, Suicide, and School Violence Prevention with Lightspeed Alert™

"When it comes to student safety, effective communication among school staff and administrators is essential. Districts must be prepared to get the right information to the right people at the right time.

In addition to Lightspeed Filter, Lightspeed offers student safety alerts through Lightspeed Alert, which provides real-time notifications when students are at risk of self-harm or violence towards others.

For Bibb County, Lightspeed Alert has become a critical component in their student safety action plans to prevent self-harm, suicide, and school violence. Hogan values being instantly notified of threats so he can quickly facilitate intervention from administrators.

"The key is to move fast. Time is of the essence. In that sense, you don't want to delay getting threats reported," says Hogan. "We've actually developed a whole new protocol procedure because we have this capability. With Lightspeed Alert, I get the alert, I send the alert information to the principal and the counselors of that school, and then I follow up on that email immediately with a phone call to say, 'Hey, I'm doing a handoff. You have an email in your inbox, please verify you received it.' Then they execute."

Microsoft Teams Integration Took Safety Alerting to the Next Level

The Lightspeed Systems integration with Microsoft Teams allows officials to monitor activity within Teams chat and provides real-time alerts of students exhibiting signs of crisis.

Since its launch, Lightspeed Alert has reported over 84,000 cases of potentially concerning student behavior worldwide, helping school staff provide timely intervention. The collaboration with Microsoft Teams and its chat capabilities amplifies the effectiveness of the platform.

“Most of our flagged safety issues have been through the [Microsoft] Teams chat logs,” says Hogan. “Immediately during the first week, we were already seeing activity that needed to be addressed. It was even giving us insight into chatrooms that we didn’t know about and were not authorized. A lot of chat rooms didn’t get closed after we implemented new policies and Lightspeed Alert allowed us to find these chatrooms by triggering an alert. It was an unforeseen advantage we’ve been able to utilize to our benefit.”

“Kids don’t just Google anymore. They chat and they text,” says Hogan. “[Teams] is usually where the conversations take place and that’s where you’re going to see the most insight into a potential issue.”

The ability of Lightspeed Alert to monitor Microsoft Teams chat has put Bibb County in the best position to protect their students. Hogan is confident they have the most in-depth capabilities available in the market.

“[Having this capability] has been extremely valuable. I mean, it's up there in the top three of content filtering needs. I don't know of any other product that monitors [Microsoft] Teams chats. It's a must-have for a remote learning environment. There's no excuse not to have a product like this in place.”

- Greg Hogan, Network and Data Security at
Bibb County Public Schools

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