Dallastown Area School District Switches From iBoss to Lightspeed Systems® For Better Filtering, Reporting, and Functionality

Dallastown Area School District

Pennsylvania

Customer Since
2018

Students
6,200

Grades
PreK-12

IT Team Members
7

Devices Used
Chromebooks
Windows Laptops

Products Used
Lightspeed Filter™

When Dallastown Area School District decided to initiate a 1:1 program, John Lenhart, Systems Administrator, had a few simple, but critical requirements: The devices needed to be filtered just as effectively off campus as they were on campus, he needed comprehensive reports of what his students were looking at online, and websites needed to be filtered without blocking educational content. When Dallastown purchased iBoss as their 1:1 filter, Lenhart quickly learned that not all filters operate as they're marketed. Fortunately, Dallastown was able to switch to a more powerful, reliable solution: Lightspeed Filter™

Disastrous Deployment

Dallastown Area School District serves 6,400 students and 734 employees across two townships in Pennsylvania. Their 1:1 initiative includes 7,500+ devices, and is a mix of Chromebooks and Windows laptops, which meant that their web filter needed to be a multi-OS solution with solid reporting and powerful mobile filtering.

At the time, Dallastown had an inline filter, but it couldn't keep up with the district's technology needs. "It just wasn't performing as well," said Lenhart. "The reports were slow to load, we'd have to call support every time we needed a report fast, and it just wasn't scalable for our 1:1, so we started looking at some cloud-based options."

In their search for a filter that would support their 1:1 program, Dallastown found iBoss, a competing filter that had recently released a cloud-based option and claimed to handle the robust reporting and off campus filtering that Lenhart was looking for. Lenhart was sold, and iBoss became the filtering solution for Dallastown's 1:1 program.

Immediately, the district began experiencing issues with the filter. "It was absolutely terrible, it didn't work at all, there were problems from the start that never went away." says Lenhart.

Aside from being unable to provide the reporting that was promised, the iBoss filter began blocking nearly every site students went to. This led to frustrated kids, teachers, and administrators, and resulted in an overwhelming amount of support tickets for the district IT team. "iBoss would block everything, whether it needed to or not," says Lenhart. "The iBoss agent required constant authentication, and they would get pop-ups all the time saying 'iBoss can't authenticate' which meant they were stuck without internet." He adds, "A lot of the time it would close a student's browser, and they would lose their work. It was infuriating for them."

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- John Lenhart, Systems Administrator from Dallastown Area School District

Dallastown has 7 staff members in their technology department, which is more than most districts, but the extra hands on deck weren't much help when the team was constantly talking to support. "With iBoss we were dealing with issues almost every day," Lenhart notes. "We never had a functional product with them, we were constantly on the phone with support for something and it was just bad all around."

After several months of back and forth, iBoss agreed to release Dallastown from their 3-year contract. "I just wanted to get out of it, so they agreed to let me pay for one year even though we committed to three," Lenhart remarks. "I knew Lightspeed had a cloud filter available at that point, so I said well I'm going to go to Lightspeed."

Lightspeed Saves the Day

Once Dallastown deployed Lightspeed Filter, it was smooth sailing from there.

Right away, implementation of the filter was easier with Lightspeed than it was with iBoss. "The filter was very easy to implement, especially for Chromebooks," Lenhart remembers. "We were up and running in less than 30 minutes from pushing out the agent."

After implementation, Lenhart was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to manage the filter, and how powerful it was. "Once we moved to Lightspeed Filter, we started saving hours a week, every week, and the difference was immediately obvious," says Lenhart. "The filter blocks sites only when necessary, and we've definitely seen a performance increase from the students since moving to Lightspeed Filter."

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Allowing Autonomy

Accurate filtering wasn't the only area where Lightspeed Filter outperformed iBoss – the reports generated by Lightspeed Filter were far superior as well. "The reporting with iBoss was very generic, mostly top-level information that anyone could see," remembers Lenhart. "Once we fully moved to Lightspeed, the reporting was more specific, it showed us everything that was blocked, all the videos the kids watched, and all the searches they made, but then there was also an option for creating reports that showed you an overview of internet usage to see exactly what particular students are doing online."

With a customizable reporting dashboard, drill-down capabilities, and a user-friendly interface, Lightspeed Web Filter was able to take the burden of reporting on students' internet usage off the technology department's plate. This allowed school administrators to take on that responsibility.

"The information in the dashboard is presented well to the end users, and we were excited to open up this system to our administration who in the past relied on IT to run every student activity report," says Lenhart. "Running the reports is easy enough to use that we were able to show our principals and other administrators how to use the system so that they'd be able to do it themselves. They had not had that autonomy before, so we gave them a filter login, and now my team doesn't even have to do student internet history reports anymore."

When comparing iBoss, where the technology department had to handle numerous support tickets a day, to Lightspeed, where administrators have the capability to run reports themselves, Lenhart is amazed at the difference. "Since we've deployed Lightspeed Filter, we've not had to run a single student report out of the tech department," Lenhart notes. "The principals are doing that now, which saves an incredible amount of time for us to focus our efforts elsewhere." He adds, "with iBoss we were getting multiple tickets a day that were filter related; now we get maybe one ticket a month with Lightspeed Filter."

The final component of the Lightspeed Filter that appeals to Lenhart is its reliability. "It just works," he says. "The SSL decryption is very reliable, and I know without a shadow of a doubt that our kids' devices are filtered. Lightspeed Filter has allowed our district to reclaim visibility to what students are doing online."

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-John Lenhart, Systems Administrator

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