



Lightspeed Alert™ Helps Caddo Parish Public Schools Address the Youth Mental Health Crisis

THE CHALLENGE

Caddo Parish Public Schools (CPPS), serving approximately 37,000 students in northwestern Louisiana, administers several of the state's top-performing schools and has won more than a dozen merit-based awards from the U.S. Department of Education.

To protect students from harm, CPPS relied on the Safety Check feature within Lightspeed Filter™ for crisis monitoring. Safety Check, the predecessor to Lightspeed Alert™, provided the machine-learning foundational training for the early-warning threat prevention solution's artificial intelligence. Safety Check flagged student activity online that indicated a threat to student safety, generating alerts that district personnel then reviewed before responding accordingly.

However, when the district pivoted to remote learning, the number of alerts the district received immediately shot up by 25%. With so many more students at risk than before, Justin Steele, Supervisor of Instructional Technology, and his team at CPPS found it difficult to adequately review each threat and to meet the mental health needs of every student.

To protect its community from potential self-harm or suicide, CPPS looked to Lightspeed Systems® for a better solution. Mr. Steele and his team needed an extra level of crisis monitoring support in order to get students the help they needed—when they needed it.

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– Justin Steele,
Instructional Technologist,
Caddo Parish Public
Schools

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THE SOLUTION

CPPS deployed Lightspeed Alert, an early-warning threat detection system that helps prevent self-harm, cyberbullying, suicide, and school violence. The solution's proprietary AI technology scans and flags potential threats to student safety within apps, browsers, documents, chat messaging applications, and social media platforms.

Upon the solution's deployment, alerts were sent simultaneously to CPPS safety personnel and to highly trained Lightspeed Safety Specialists working 24/7/365 conducting threat assessments. Imminent threats to student safety were immediately escalated to Mr. Steele and designated district personnel and law enforcement. This afforded Mr. Steele real peace of mind: he and his team could be sure that no alert would go unnoticed, no matter the time of day it appeared.

Mr. Steele quickly understood what a powerful resource the district had found for student protection. "In the first eleven days after deploying the solution," he said, "we received a big spike in alerts."

Thanks to the Lightspeed Safety Specialists who analyzed each alert in context, CPPS staff only had to follow up on the alerts that were of real concern. Mr. Steele and his team were therefore relieved of the burden of monitoring safety alerts day and night—leaving them free to devote their attention where it could make a difference.

THE DIFFERENCE

Lightspeed Alert has helped Caddo Parish prevent students from taking their own lives. "Just recently there were two different potential suicide threats," Mr. Steele said.

With the first, when a Lightspeed Safety Specialist confirmed that an alert indicated imminent self-harm, district personnel pulled the at-risk student out of class. "The student broke down and said he was thinking about suicide and was looking at ways to do it," Mr. Steele said. "He was able to get help because of that alert!"

Mr. Steele continued, "We had another kid who was contemplating suicide recently, but the student has since received help. I fear that if CPPS had not deployed Lightspeed Alert, that student would not be here with us today—with this solution I had a 15-20 minute head start, which can make all the difference when trying to save a student's life. That's how real the threat is and how much Lightspeed helps."

For Mr. Steele, the speed and accuracy Lightspeed Alert provides are critical to his efforts to promote student safety. "Before CPPS got Lightspeed Alert, when I would notice something concerning, I would have to go and dig down and take screenshots and share them with everyone who needed to be aware of the situation," Mr. Steele explained. "Now Lightspeed Alert takes the screenshots for me. I can easily forward those screenshots straight to the principal or to a parent."

In addition to flagging incidents of potential self-harm and suicide, Lightspeed Alert has helped keep the Caddo Parish community safe by flagging violence, cyberbullying, and advanced attempts to bypass content filtering as well. "We've caught kids threatening each other, and we've stopped fights in the hallways," said Mr. Steele. "Now that we use Lightspeed Alert, our students have started behaving a lot better."

When asked if he would recommend Lightspeed Alert to other districts, Mr. Steele agreed wholeheartedly. "I can't praise Lightspeed Alert enough," he said. "I can say with 100% certainty that it's saved numerous lives."



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