



Lauderdale County School District protects its students from dangerous content with the help of Lightspeed Filter™

CHALLENGE

In 2019, Lauderdale County School District (LCSD), a rural school system serving 8,500 students in northern Alabama, faced a problem. LCSD's filtering service—Bark—wasn't meeting the district's needs: to implement a 1:1 program that kept students safe while granting access to critical educational materials, the district needed to block all dangerous content without blocking anything else.

Bark failed the district on both counts. First, the filter was flagging a lot of essential educational content as potentially risky. For example, when teachers assigned students Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the filter would frequently alert the district's IT team that students were engaging potentially dangerous and violent online content. Worse, Bark would often let through content that actually posed a threat to student safety. These false flags and holes in the filter forced the district to spend a lot of extra time and resources to ensure student safety.

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SOLUTION

To better protect LCSD's students and to free up his team for other critical tasks, Mr. Mansell switched to Lightspeed Filter.

Lightspeed Filter is the best-in-class solution that protects students from harmful material to ensure their online safety. Lightspeed Systems® has the most mature and complete K-12 database in the industry, leveraging human review by data scientists and advanced AI technology to block inappropriate sites—including new and unknown ones—while still allowing access to critical educational materials. Lightspeed Filter helps technology teams scale student safety with device-level protections that work across all devices, operating systems, and learning environments. Whether it's protecting take-home devices or customizing blocklists for grade level, the filter has districts covered with SSL decryption on all devices, on the network and off, all in the cloud.

Built for out-of-the-box CIPA compliance, Lightspeed Filter leverages 20 years of web-indexing to filter more than 60 million URLs into 138 default categories. With granular settings at the local level, Mr. Mansell now has full control and can categorize websites in each student group. In addition to being spared so many false alerts, he can also block new and unknown websites before they have been categorized in the database.

RESULTS

"Lightspeed Filter just works better in lots of ways," says Mr. Mansell. **"Now I can actually go home and get eight hours of sleep a night."** Mr. Mansell explains that, now that LCSD has adopted Lightspeed Filter, he doesn't have to worry so much. The filter allows students to access age-appropriate materials—say, an essay about Harper Lee—while also blocking malicious content.

Mr. Mansell also stresses that adopting Lightspeed Filter has been especially beneficial to the district's social workers in their efforts to better serve students struggling with mental and emotional health. **"Our social workers are much happier with this filter,"** he says. **"It does a better job if a student talks about being depressed or cutting or other forms of self-harm. This filter does a really good job flagging that sort of online activity, which helps us get these students the help and counseling services they need. I really think we've saved some lives."**

While demanding less time and fewer resources from the IT team than the district's previous filter, Lightspeed Systems is helping LCSD better protect its students from dangerous content, maintain their access to critical materials, and help promote public health. **"Lightspeed just makes a really good filter,"** Mr. Mansell concludes. **"I would recommend it to other districts."**

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