

Keeping Students Safe on the Internet

Tuscarora Blended Learning Charter School

Not every school fits the traditional model. Nearly 3,000 new charter schools have emerged since legislation made the concept viable in 1991.

Chartering allows schools to run independently of the traditional public school system and to tailor their programs to community needs. For example, programs for children with specific disabilities, programs for gifted students, adult education, professional education and even programs for children who are incarcerated are all types of programs that may be developed as a specific “charter.”

These programs provide innovative alternatives for communities that are governed by the values of opportunity, choice, and responsibility for results.

The Tuscarora Blended Learning Charter School in McVeytown, Pennsylvania is just such an organization. For the past two years, Tuscarora has served as the “home base” for curriculum development, teacher education and special education and resource programs for the counties of Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin in Pennsylvania. Tuscarora generally supports as many as 300 students at once.

As with any publicly authorized school, Tuscarora must provide internet filtering to protect its students from unwanted internet content on the school’s computers and while they are working on school materials and programs. However, unlike traditional schools, a charter school’s students may be mostly or entirely based away from the school.

When Tuscarora considered this challenge, they knew that no traditional internet filtering product would work – regardless of the cost or comprehensiveness, all but one of the programs available were designed to support PCs that were physically connected to the school’s local area network (LAN).

For that reason, the practical choice for Tuscarora was ContentProtect from ContentWatch (www.contentwatch.com). Unlike other programs, ContentProtect is client based, meaning that school administrators can set filtering policies from the school network, but students who log in receive the filtering protection from wherever they are.

Dan Berger, network administrator for Tuscarora, reports that the ability to modify policies on the fly has been one of the product’s most important features.

“With 300 students, it’s inevitable that they’ll be running into sites that get blocked because they’re questionable, but that are actually appropriate and important for these students in order to complete the research and schooling they need,” Berger said. “ContentProtect lets you quickly re-categorize these sites to allow all of our students to remain protected without eliminating their access to the resources they need.”

Berger looks forward to additional enhancements in the ContentProtect product line. He knows that supporting 300 students from unique remote locations is an

unusual requirement, but with the increasingly strong management capabilities in ContentProtect, he's confident that Tuscarora is up to the task.