

School Filtering Levels as of 2/9/10

Proposed Question:

Ok, this topic has been discussed several times, and then discussed again, so I really don't want to get into a large debate or discussion about Internet filtering again, but as far as I know nobody has ever asked the question: What exactly does everyone do for filtering?

Here at South Burlington, we're currently working through the process of deciding on whether or not to reduce our Internet filtering to the minimal levels required by CIPA and opening up our filters. As you can imagine, there are lots of opinions and cases for reducing the filtering level, or keeping the level of filtering high (and several other options in between).

I was asked the other morning what other schools are doing. I could only answer anecdotally. It would be helpful to us (and I suspect to others as well) if people wouldn't mind taking a moment to briefly share what you're doing at your school. In an effort to be respectful of everyone's time, and to keep the subject focused on facts versus opinion, I've made a list of several common (albeit generic) choices which you can use to expedite the process. If you really feel the need to share more information, or the choices provided just don't work for you, the last option is for you.

Please respond to the list, so everyone can share in the information exchange.

- A. We have a high level of filtering in place (extensive blacklist subscriptions, additional extensive blacklist entries maintained by the school, aggressive weighted phrasing scores, blocking pictures & ads, etc.)
- B. We have a medium level of filtering in place (blacklist subscriptions, or preconfigured hardware appliances, etc.)
- C. We have a minimum level of filtering in place (minimum blacklists, little to no weighted phrasing scores, or the least amount of filtering we interrupt we need to meet CIPA requirements)
- D. No filtering in place at all
- E. Other (something entirely different, or a combination of the above, etc.) Please take a moment to briefly share what you're doing.

Answers:

1. South Burlington

Somewhere in between options A and B.

2. MSJ

MSJ is light on filters heavy on reporting (lightspeed). I am hoping to have some of my trainings next year focus on how to teach with computers where one of the subjects will be monitoring.

3. Milton

At Milton, I would say that we are somewhere between A & B (closer to B), dependant upon the user being filtered.

We use Smartfilter (now by McAfee) on top of an ISA server. This gives us the capability to filter by user and thus we have different filtering packages for staff, high/middle school and elementary school students. We choose the categories that we desire to filter (and there are many to choose from) and we download a list every night that updates the sites which fall into these categories.

Although we block image search engines (because we are not able to control the image thumbnails which are returned) we have created a solution for users to do Google image searches. This is done by restricting them from being able to change the preferences. Thus, we are relying upon Google's filter to keep inappropriate thumbnails from being returned in the search.

4. Winooski

At Winooski, I would say we are at B. We use an 8e6 appliance which does all of the filtering. We block all pornography, video and music streaming (mostly to limit the bandwidth), facebook, youtube, etc. Teachers have their own Internet Override account to get into any web page except for pornography.

5. Walden

At Walden School we're around your level C. We have a SonicWall set for web filtering, blocking the "obvious" categories provided by SonicWall. Just recently I un-blocked the "uncategorized" category -- it was creating headaches for staff, as lots of innocuous sites were getting blocked.

6. Waterbury-Duxbury

- > B. We have a medium level of filtering in place (blacklist
- > subscriptions, or preconfigured hardware appliances, etc.)

iPrism appliance with "the usual suspects" restricted by category. Image and video searches are restricted (K-8) to identified sites. Staff have override capability and can apply for commonly used sites to be whitelisted.

7. St Albans

At St Albans City School we use filtering to try to keep kids from accidentally stumbling across inappropriate web sites. We also filter using free resources. We have Dans Guardian running on CentOS. This is set to scan web pages, the Naughtiness number is set to 100. As a reference, 50 would be for real little kids, 160 for high school. We also use OpenDns which has categories and an well maintained list of sites. We have "the usual suspects" blocked there. We have myspace and facebook blacklisted along with several proxy sites we caught the kids using. In looking at our logs I feel like we have successfully chosen our battlefield, it is facebook, that is what the kids are trying to access, not porn or other less savory stuff. We also have you tube and most other web 2.0 sites open. Very teacher friendly filtering. Supervision is our primary tool for controlling what kids do on the Internet.