

Web Filtering in Today's Schools:

Balancing IT and Educator Needs



To manage the school network, meet requirements, monitor AUP adherence, control bandwidth, and ensure safety and security of online users, IT departments rely on web filters.

To teach and engage students and arm them with the 21st century skills they need for success, educators turn to the Web—and then often get blocked by the filter.

Schools need to balance the needs of both sides.

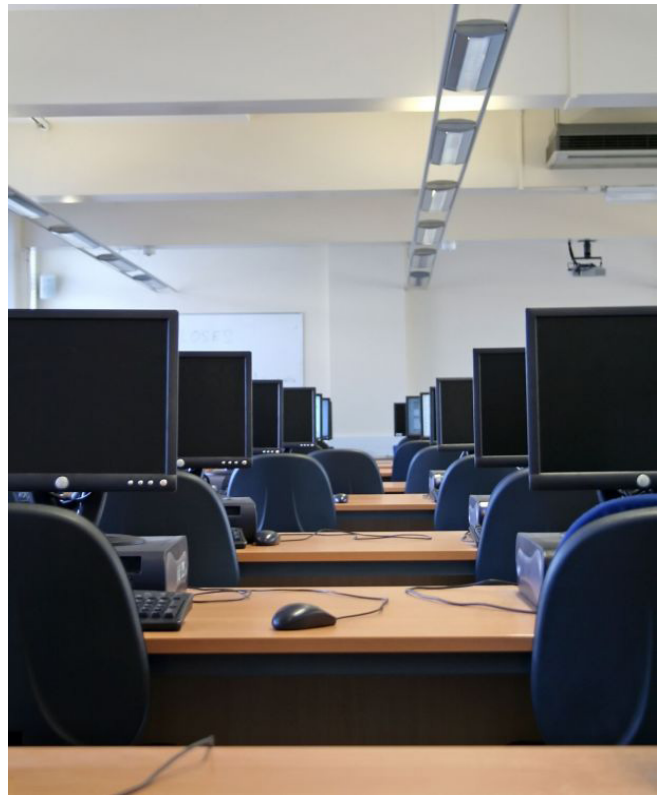
Blocking inappropriate content **doesn't have to block learning**

Why Filter?

- Safety of students
- Security of network
- Identification of cyberbullying
- Enforcement of Acceptable Use Policies
- Monitoring use of school resources
- Controlling traffic for bandwidth purposes
- Monitor mobile device usage

Challenges of Web Filtering:

- Balancing security and safety with learning and education
- Meeting needs of various groups and individuals
- Ensuring overblocking doesn't hinder learning
- Ensuring underblocking doesn't impede safety and security
- Enforcing policies despite sophisticated new proxy technologies
- Providing safe access to dynamic content and collaborative tools
- BYOD and mobile learning programs



"The rich functionality allows us to tailor web filtering to cope with our very diverse student population across many age groups and various subject matter"

Rob Arnold, Canterbury College

Best Practices in Filtering

Differentiate Policies

Teachers and students need to access different things to do their jobs. In addition, a primary school student requires access to different sites than a secondary school student. And one user who abuses online access shouldn't lead to overblocking across the board. Differentiated policies should allow you to set different levels of access and different filtering policies by user type, grade, and even individual.

Trust Teachers

The people who work with students all day in the classroom, who create lessons and plan activities, who research a topic and dig up new resources to make it engaging for students, should also be trusted to access the Internet and determine what students can see for a specific lesson or class. Allowing several hours (let alone several days or weeks) for an adjustment to a filtering policy by IT is often a hindrance to learning—as well as a drain on IT resources. Aside from differentiated policies for teachers, trusting and empowering teachers can be accomplished safely with Overrides and other filtering features that allow teachers to bring resources together for student access (all under the monitoring of IT).

Collaborate

Though the school network has shifted from being primarily an infrastructural element to a learning tool, educators often feel left out of decisions about what content has educational benefits and what filtering policies should block and allow. Making the creation of filtering policies a collaborative effort between IT, teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and even students can ensure that all needs are met—and varied viewpoints are considered.

Be Transparent

When users know the schools filtering policy, the reasons behind it, and the specific reasons certain sites are blocked, they are generally more understanding and accepting. In addition to a transparent policy, users feel less frustrated about filtering when they are able to search a transparent database (that allows users to see how and why a site is categorised) and to recommend sites for review.

Considerations When Choosing a Web Filter

Does it *get* education?

Schools aren't businesses, and only a solution made for schools can properly categorise web sites and implement features that promote educational goals.

Can it filter your mobile devices?

Even if you don't have a mobile learning program now, chances are you will eventually. And you probably already have students and staff bringing their own devices and using them on your network.

What does it do about dynamic content and Web 2.0?

'Block it' or 'allow it' for broad categories of content isn't a good enough choice. Schools need a way to allow the educational aspects of Web 2.0 while blocking the inappropriate content.

Can you customise it?

Your school is unique and you need a filter that you can granularly control to meet your specific needs.

Do you **HAVE** to customise it?

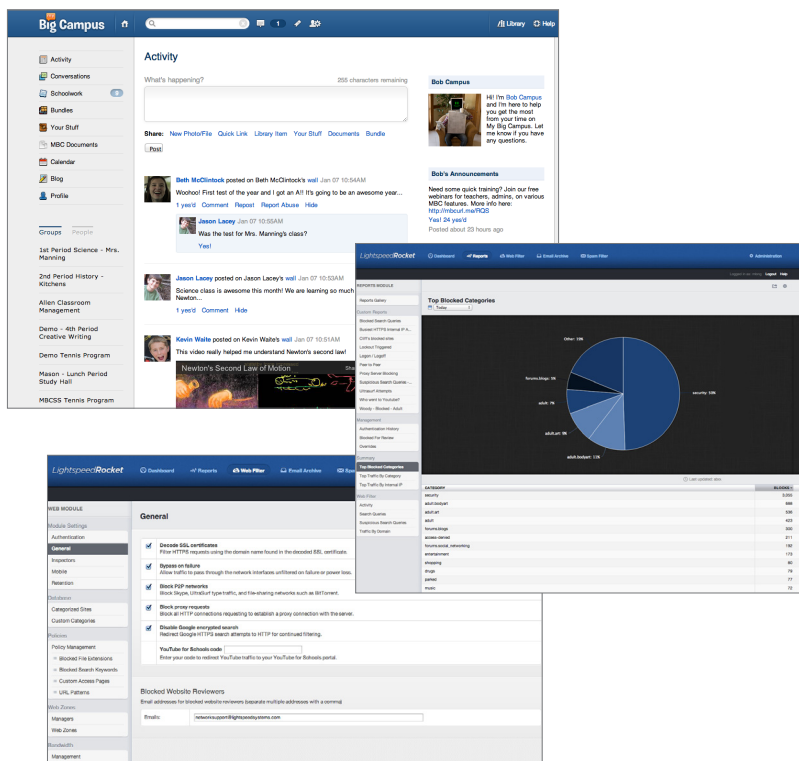
While customisation is essential, so are default best practices—because extra time is one thing most IT teams don't have.

The Lightspeed Systems Solution

It's time to rethink web filtering for schools. As much as a web filter needs to block inappropriate content, it also needs to ALLOW education. This means access to tools, resources, and people that can make learning engaging and real.

While those resources and tools already exist to a large degree, they're often found in disparate, unmanaged solutions that end up being silos of information or underused because they're overblocked.

The Lightspeed Systems solution is different. The Collaborative Filter combines communication, collaboration and resources with the filter—all in a single, easily managed solution.



The Collaborative Filter includes:

- Web Filtering
- Mobile Filtering
- My Big Campus (VLE)
- Advanced Reporting (add-on)

It gives schools a safe, monitored, integrated way to access resources, collaborate, communicate, share information, and more—across groups and classes, schools, towns, and even the whole My Big Campus community.

What's in it for IT?

- Transparent education-specific database
- Web traffic prioritisation
- Easy management
- Granular reporting on activity
- Virus scanning
- Authenticated user access
- Differentiated policies
- Cross-platform desktop and mobile support
- Unlimited hosted file storage
- Hosted or on-site solution

What's in it for educators?

- Differentiated access
- Educator-focused features like Overrides and Web Zones
- Collaborative groups, discussions, messaging, and other tools
- Access to videos and other often-blocked resources
- Online assignment posting, submission, and grading
- Online assessments and real-time results
- PLNs and Local Authority level topic groups
- Safe platform to teach digital citizenship
- Fun, engaging, easy-to-use interface
- FAQs, help videos, tutorials, chat support
- Standards-based content and lessons
- Reporting on student progress
- Easy communication with parents
- Hands-on practice of good digital citizenship

Find out more at lightspeedsystems.com