



Mobile County PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CASE STUDY

A Proactive Approach to Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment

The Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) has (4) primary **Core Beliefs and Commitments** by which they govern. There is one in particular that is addressed in this case study that reads:

“We believe in safe, secure and productive environments for learning and working; and we are committed to providing quality and equitable settings that ensure students and employees reach their potential”.

The Backdrop

The school safety discussion is considered quite broad in many respects, but certain elements of that discussion have not received as much collaborative attention as others. Given the explosion of technology being introduced into the classroom and into the everyday lives of the K12 student, being proactive to ensure a safe learning environment has never become more critical than it is today.

For MCPSS, the State of Alabama’s largest public school system, achieving such an objective has long been the focus and commitment of the District. As tragedies began to play-out in school Districts across the country, MCPSS was interested in determining how students were using their computers and engaged SlateXP to provide insight into that behavior. The analysis proved that computers were not being used for their intended purpose and the District decided to implement LearnSafe. Recognizing that this issue may not be unique to student devices, the District decided to deploy LearnSafe to staff and student devices.

MCPSS has a large technology infrastructure and was concerned about the impact of adding LearnSafe to their network. Once it was proven that LearnSafe had minimal impact on the network, the District deployed LearnSafe system-wide. With a deeper understanding of how students and staff were using computers it became clear that there were areas of concern.

The New K12 Environment

While essential to teaching and learning in the 21st century, most school Districts recognize that computers can be used as a platform **to threaten, bully, express self-harm or suicidal thoughts, discuss violence, drugs and weapons possession, view pornography, enable radicalization, engage in inappropriate relationships** and much more.

Industry: K12 Education

School District: Mobile County Public School Systems

Schools: (89) **Students:** (57,910) **Staff:** (7,910)

Need: Support District’s unwavering commitment to behavior-driven student and staff cyber-safety in multiple environments.

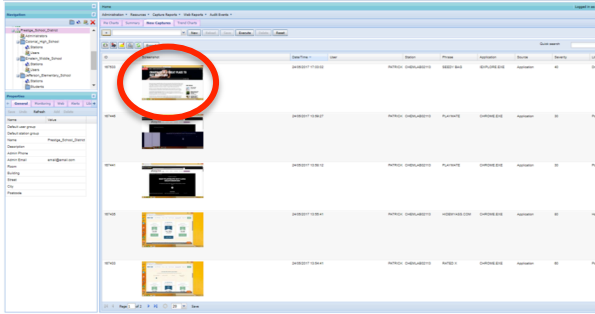
Solution: Simple but practical and easily deployed student and/or staff computer supervision tool.

Technology Used: Deployment of small Windows-based .msi installer package file that, based on a proprietary library of words/phrases triggers and sends screen captures to a capture management console for efficient review and appropriate action.

Website
<http://www.mcpss.com>



The Underlying Reality



The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires that school Districts have an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to set expectations and to govern behavior, but also install a content filter to block access to inappropriate websites in order to be eligible for E-Rate funds. In 2012 CIPA was expanded to require Internet Safety Training to students and **Monitoring** of student use of computers to be compliant with and eligible for E-Rate funding.

Most all Districts have a content filter, thus meeting the minimum requirements of CIPA. However, there are commonly known limitations as to the effectiveness of a

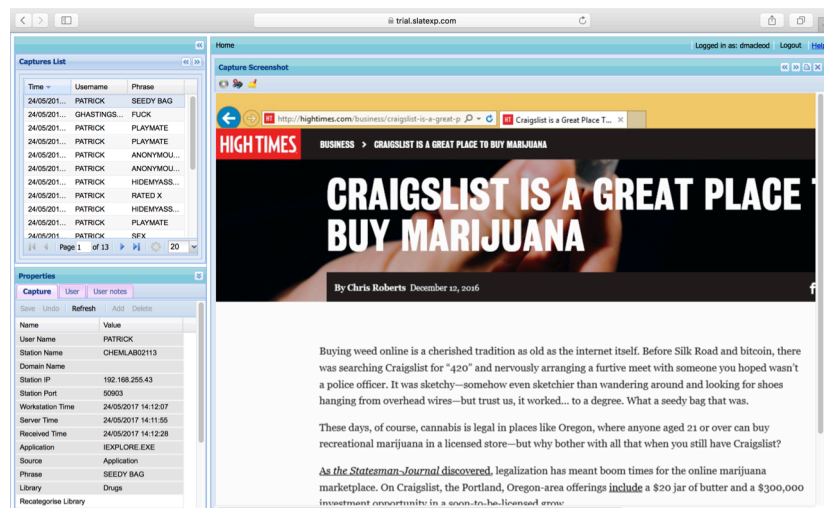
content filter. Bypasses and work-arounds allow technology savvy students to get beyond the boundaries set by content filters. Content filters, despite their name, do not address activities on social media nor do they pick up on the context of what the user is doing. This poses a challenge to Districts in that students and staff may be behaving in ways that compromises theirs or the Districts safety. Such concerns had MCPSS asking an important question:

How much is being invested to ensure that the millions of dollars being spent on the purchase and support of school-provided computers is being used responsibly outside the minimally required web filter which most IT Directors acknowledge that students can easily circumvent. Can we do more?

How Do We Identify the Warning Signs?

MPCSS quickly realized that these issues were more directly connected to behavior identification and beyond the sole responsibility of the IT Department. The belief was that the inappropriate use of their public-owned and provided computers was not necessarily a technology problem, but a behavioral problem. There became a need to answer even tougher questions:

- What are students talking about, thinking about, planning or feeling?
- How are students expressing themselves and could it be occurring on school-provided computers?
- How can we tell who may need help or what potential concerns might be out there?
- What are the warning signs?





LearnSafe Answered All Questions:

LearnSafe's student safety and computer monitoring system enabled MCPSS to assure that activities of minors are monitored for appropriate use of school owned computers as required by CIPA's latest computer monitoring requirements (FCC 11-125). LearnSafe increases student safety in areas that aren't detected by content filters by using sophisticated technology processes to uncover if inappropriate activity and behavior is occurring on social media, the internet at-large or the local device. LearnSafe's comprehensive vulnerability library detects & reports when inappropriate content is created or viewed by users, **whether the users are on-line or offline, on-campus or off, on an Internet browser or on a desktop application (like Word or PPT), on email, in chat rooms, social media platforms or sharing information via a personal thumb drive and accessing websites not blocked by a content filter.**

Districts need to have some measure of understanding of what students are doing on District provided computers. School leaders use LearnSafe's evidence-based incident reports to identify serious concerns and support meaningful interventions to drive lasting improvements in student digital behavior. The data is easily accessible, easily understood and available in a print-ready format to document, enable action and be able to alert the appropriate personnel or law enforcement if necessary or when required. Specific benefits include:

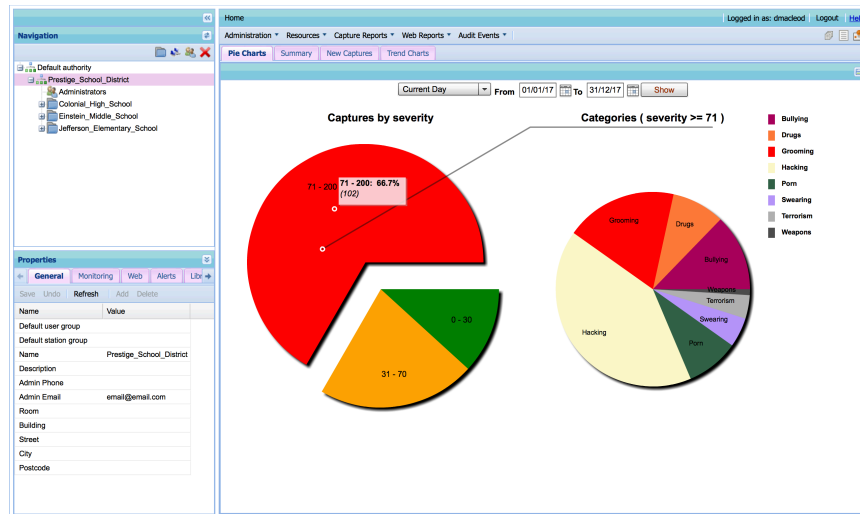
- **Meets Federal Communication Commission Compliance Order** - LearnSafe, is specifically designed for the K12 school environment, helps you meet the FCC Order (11-125) and assures you are taking reasonable precautions to make your District e-safe.
- **Supervises 24/7 – Online or Offline – On Campus or Off Campus** - LearnSafe monitors computer's regardless of whether they are on a District network or off-campus. This ensures incidents are immediately captured, both during lessons and outside of class, when students and staff may be tempted to use the computer for activities other than which they were intended.
- **Captures incidents automatically** - LearnSafe enables teachers to spend more time teaching rather than monitoring students manually, establishing greater confidence that misuse will still be captured.
- **Targets only inappropriate behavior** - Rather than creating indiscriminate logs of all student activity, LearnSafe pinpoints and prioritizes the most serious safeguarding issues, making it easier for you to manage.
- **Detects cyber-bullying and pastoral concerns** - LearnSafe identifies students who might be at risk from harm by capturing signs of cyber-bullying, predatory grooming, depression, self-harm, weapons and suicide.
- **Highlights proxy bypass use** - Most students know how to use proxy bypass sites to bypass Internet filtering controls and reach blocked or banned websites. LearnSafe captures evidence of any proxy bypass use.
- **Contains ten comprehensive pre-defined libraries** - LearnSafe contains a comprehensive collection of words and phrases associated with e-safety or computer misuse, including slang, SMS terms and indicators of predatory grooming.
- **Acts as an effective deterrent** - Because students know that inappropriate behavior will be detected at all times, LearnSafe provides a powerful incentive for them to take greater responsibility for their actions.
- **Cross platform, captures viewed words** - LearnSafe detects content as it appears on screen, not just typed in from a keyboard for either Windows devices, MAC's or Chromebooks.



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With Limited Time/Staff MCPSS Appreciated the Simple Implementation

- SlateXP created a structure according to the MCPSS operating units.
- MCPSS deployed LearnSafe through their network software deployment system.
- Software begins triggering captures when the user reboots his/her computer.
- SlateXP prepares customized e-Safety Training Guide and sets up user name access for appointed building level e-Safety Analysts to the LearnSafe capture management console.
- SlateXP trained building level personnel how to access the console and use the platform in 10 minutes a day. LearnSafe also provides access to a basic support portal.



The Results That Matter!

Students:

MCPSS had suspected that social media was where most of the bullying between students was occurring. LearnSafe has given the District the ability to capture instances of bullying and threats that happen at home, but are a problem brought to the campus. With LearnSafe as a part of the overall strategic plan of the District they are able to keep students safer and allow them to focus more on the educational tasks at hand.

At MCPSS word got around that computers are being monitored and students have significantly improved their behavior.

Staff:

The District has been able to address issues of computer misuse with employees and have addressed or removed the most severe violators. LearnSafe helps the HR department address inappropriate behavior before it becomes a problem and costs the District monetarily or professionally.

No Technical Concerns:

MCPSS was initially concerned that LearnSafe would negatively impact bandwidth but have had no problems whatsoever.

LearnSafe Has Proven to Support the District's Commitment to the Community & Strengthened its Reputation

LearnSafe is a way to let the public know the steps taken to protect students. LearnSafe addresses how employees and students use their computers at school or at home. Just because they are off network does not free them from the standards set by the District.

NOTE:

- For Districts who are committed to student safety, SlateXP will build a custom LearnSafe install so that the District may conduct a "30-Day Behavioral Assessment" at NO charge.
- SlateXP recommends that the Assessment trial cover at least 1,000+ computers and include 3-4 High Schools, some Middle Schools and a few Elementary schools.

