Using Access to YouTube, Pandora, and Other Streaming Internet Services to Infuse Digital Citizenship Practices
Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District
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Genesis

In 2011, our district opened access to YouTube for teachers for the first time and immediately observed a 400% increase in average daily bandwidth usage. It was the right thing to do, and we were happy to do it, but this action impressed on us the importance of building our network capacity way beyond our current needs.

In the following years, we worked hard to bring our network and Internet access to a place where we could make bold instructional decisions without fear of creating network problems. By the summer of 2015, we believed we could allow YouTube access for 22,000 students without creating network problems, but ***we weren't convinced our teachers and administrators were ready to handle the Digital Citizenship related situations that would arise as we provided more unfettered access***.

In response to this concern, we came up with an idea: rather than simply opening YouTube because we could, let's let schools earn access to YouTube for their students by demonstrating they are doing the things that promote Digital Citizenship.

Goal

Our big, hairy goal is to create environments in our schools that are relevant to the world outside of school. We believe that when we promote relevance, we are more likely to engage passion in our students and draw out their best. It's difficult to prepare students for the world outside of school when school itself doesn't look much like that world. With this in mind, we had to ask ourselves, "***If students don't have access to YouTube at school, but they do have access at home, or Starbucks, or McDonald's, how are we protecting them?***" We can pretend that they are protected because we block, but in the real world, they are unprepared for what they'll encounter unless we've made Digital Citizenship a priority, and it's unlikely we'll be able to cover Digital Citizenship concepts thoroughly at school if we don't actually put students in a position to practice them.

Ultimately, we need to infuse Digital Citizenship concepts into our curriculum and provide access to the Internet resources that require them simultaneously.

Resources

Our Educational Technology team began by creating the [Digital Citizenship Checklist](), which is a list of actions that should be repeated on a regular basis to prepare students, parents, and staff to successfully navigate a connected world. Simultaneously, our IT team began working out the best way in our environment to increase or decrease Internet access for students at entire schools without affecting Internet access at other schools. This was an interesting problem to solve, since our models for Internet filtering at that time were solely based on the type of user (teacher, administrator, student, etc.) district wide.

Ultimately, we determined the best manageable way to solve this problem was to use our account provisioning system, which takes input from our student information system to create or disable student accounts and puts them in the proper Internet user group automatically. We added a data element to the School table in our account provisioning system that allowed us to turn increased access to the Internet on or off by school, then we programmed the system to move all students at a school from one Internet group to the other, individually, when the school switch was flipped. In our account provisioning system, all actions typically happen once a day, in the middle of the night, but we do have the ability to make changes happen anytime we want. ***If your school district doesn't have an automated account provisioning system, we highly recommend you get one.*** Attempting to manage this kind of functionality without one is likely to cause your network administrator to run for the hills in a panic.

Challenges

Beyond the IT challenges mentioned above, we had curiously few with this idea. Our teacher association hasn't viewed access to streaming services for students as a right they felt inclined to fight for without requiring Digital Citizenship work to be done.

One challenge we did have to overcome was to decide whether earning streaming services for students by school would be permanent, or need to be renewed periodically. We determined that because new staff and students are always entering the school, we needed to make it a periodic renewal. To make sure that schools who earned streaming access the year before had it at the beginning of a new school year, we give them grace period until October 1st to re-earn their certification. This model has worked well, with only one school being shut off this year on October 1st, only to re-earn their certification 2 weeks later.