What is Content Filtering?

Content filtering, also known as web filtering, is a system that restricts access to online content. It works by using a set of rules, which are typically set by the institution, to block access to certain types of content.

By allowing access to the Internet, educational institutions, under regulations like CIPA, FERPA and COPPA, need to protect the privacy of students and ensure they are safe from inappropriate content and cyber threats. This counts for the EdTech tools they use in their district as well. Schools also have to ensure that students use their time wisely and focus on their studies rather than wasting time on websites that are not educational in nature.

Content filters are used to block access to distracting websites and services, such as social media and gaming sites, as well as types of content that may be inappropriate, such as pornography and violence. They can also be used to block access to certain types of files, such as executable files, which can be used to spread malware.

This is crucial in today's K12 educational landscape as more schools implement the use of Chromebooks, Laptops, and iPads in their classrooms. Research shows that digital distractions obstruct effective online instruction, and it can take up to 30 minutes for students to refocus after being distracted by technology use.

Content filtering can also be used to monitor and record student activity online, allowing the institution to track which websites they are visiting, as well as how long they are spending on them. This can help the institution identify any potential problems, such as cyberbullying or other types of online abuse, as well as provide a basis for data-driven instruction.