

Missouri school district earns high marks with new network security solution from WWT

SITUATION

Like their counterparts in the private sector, school administrators must defend against threats to their network and keep information confidential. Everyone knows that security is crucial, but that fact was suddenly driven home to the Mehlville School District. A few small network incidents set off the mental alarms that security and auditing capabilities could and should be better.

So before the minor breaches became a major catastrophe, the district's IT team took action. "We never know when or where the next threat or Acceptable Use Policy violation may occur," says Steven Lee, the district's ITS Director. "Even the small events convinced us we needed a better system to protect our wireless network and data services."

And since cost was a factor, the solution had to fully integrate with the district's existing network investments. However, in spite of the budget requirements, Lee and his team still wanted tools that were comprehensive in all aspects of network security. They also wanted a solution that would allow the IT staff to quickly access status reports and monitor user activity on the network.

SOLUTION

The district IT staff's first step was to find a partner with an advanced degree in security. The team checked credentials and selected World Wide Technology (WWT). "They gave us a plan that would fit our network, engineers who know network security, plus they already had a solid track record with the district," says Lee.

WWT planned and implemented a solution that provides tighter network security, delivers comprehensive reporting capabilities, and integrates fully into the existing network.

The new solution consists of:

- **Cisco ACS server** to allow Cisco devices to use Novell names, groups and passwords for authentication, authorization and accounting purposes
- **Cisco PIX 515e firewall and Websense software** to control and report on Internet traffic access
- **Cisco VPN concentrator** for the single source of remote access to the network
- **Cisco 4240 IPS Intrusion detection/prevention** network appliance to identify and block intruders

COMPANY PROFILE

The Mehlville School District, in south St. Louis County, Missouri, serves the communities of Mehlville, Oakville, Concord, and Lemay. The district employs over 700 teachers and administrators and has an annual enrollment of 12,000 students, pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

- **Cisco MARS-Protego** device to monitor and log all security devices
- **CiscoWorks** server
- **eEye Retina vulnerability scanner** to spot potential threats on the server and client host machines
- **Solar Winds Engineering Edition** integrated with CiscoWorks to monitor the network and performance

"WWT promised better security and reports by devices to the MARS-Protego Server. And they came through for us," Lee says.

RESULTS

Today, the district can resolve problems faster than ever. Now, when a security event occurs, the IT staff can pinpoint the location and eliminate the threat. "We can report in detail, by user, any access to the network," Lee explains. If anyone tries to access secure information, the IT team will know it.

"Before, when a virus or other problem hit our network, we didn't have much to work with. Now we save a lot of our own time, as well as user downtime, by using the new performance tools and event logs so we can quickly dispatch a technician to the point of failure."

Lee adds that the new security system has enabled them to take a more proactive approach to protecting the district network and confidential information. "We check our events each morning and if something is detected, we handle it."

As for next steps: "We're already evaluating several additional layers of network and data security," says Lee. "When we do, WWT will be the first partner we'll call."



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