

The Organization

Hall County Schools
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The Challenge

- Inefficient and ineffective web content filtering
- Outdated firewall technology

The SonicWALL Solution

- SonicWALL E-Class NSA E7500
- SonicWALL Content Filtering Service
- SonicWALL ViewPoint
- SonicWALL Application Intelligence, Control and Visualization

The Results

- Comprehensive, reliable web filtering
- Lower administrative overhead costs
- Consolidated hardware costs
- Streamlined filtering policy
- Comprehensive gateway security services

Hall County Schools is a public school district in Hall County, Georgia. Based in Gainesville, the district employs 4,800 teachers and staff members, supporting 26,000 students attending 21 elementary schools, six middle schools, and seven high schools.

The challenge: inefficient and ineffective web content filtering

Previously, the district had deployed Cisco® ASA firewalls and Websense® content filtering. Over time, however, the district became increasingly dissatisfied with these solutions.

“Students had learned to bypass Websense on the SSL side, and we needed a solution that could block the proxy sites,” said Jeremy Hutton, network engineer at Hall County Schools. “On top of that, managing black lists and white lists on the Cisco ASA was cumbersome.”

In addition to content filtering and ease-of-management, the district sought robust monitoring and reporting, single sign-on (SSO) and CIPA compliance. Hall County Schools evaluated filtering solutions from Websense®, iPrism, Cymphonix®, Blue Coat® and other vendors before purchasing an integrated SonicWALL® E-Class Network Security Appliance (NSA) E7500 solution from their Dell reseller.

“The NSA E7500 had all the features we wanted, plus others we didn’t have before, like integrated gateway security services, SSO and application intelligence and control,” said C. J. Daab, technology support coordinator at Hall County Schools. “SonicWALL gave us a one-stop, cost-effective package.”

The solution: SonicWALL E-Class Network Security Appliance E7500

The district deployed paired NSA E7500 appliances in High Availability (HA) mode at both its central office and its offsite data center.

“SonicWALL support was instrumental in making it a smooth deployment,” stated Hutton.

Deployable as either a Next-Generation Firewall or Unified Threat Management Firewall, the NSA E7500 for large enterprise networks features Content Filtering, Gateway Anti-Virus, Anti-Spyware, Intrusion Prevention, and Application Intelligence, Control and Visualization.

“We’re all juggling multiple projects,” reflected Hutton. “Being able to manage everything from one place lets us reallocate IT resources to other projects that help the district.”

Combining SonicWALL Reassembly-Free Deep Packet Inspection™ (RFDPI) technology with a multi-core platform, the NSA E7500 is configurable to analyze and control thousands of unique applications, whether unencrypted or encrypted with SSL.

The result: comprehensive web filtering and much more

Featuring a dynamic rating and caching architecture, the solution blocks noncompliant and dangerous web content and enforces the district’s productivity and protection policies.

“Blocking threats before they can even get into our network has been a big security plus for us,” said Daab.

Hall County Schools Case Study

"SonicWALL has saved us up to 50 percent in costs. Our savings have been two-fold, both in consolidating appliance costs and in reducing of networks administration."

– C. J. Daab
Technology Support Coordinator
Hall County Schools

SonicWALL Benefits

- Real-time scanning of all network traffic
- Application Intelligence, Control and Visualization
- High performance multi-core architecture
- Clientless secure remote access

The district can configure and control content filtering from the NSA E7500, eliminating the costs of a separate dedicated filtering server.

"SonicWALL has saved us up to 50 percent in costs," affirmed Daab. "Our savings have been two-fold, both in consolidating appliance costs and in reducing overhead of networks administration."

The NSA E7500 has enabled authorized district staff and faculty to leverage social media resources such as YouTube, Twitter and videoconferencing as administrative and teaching tools.

"Authenticating by group lets us streamline filtering policy," said Daab. "A teacher can access other schools around the world, or teach at multiple locations without leaving the classroom."

"SonicWALL excelled against competing products in reporting," added Daab.

SonicWALL ViewPoint™ reporting provides the district with a high level of network visibility through graphs, charts and granular drill-down search functionality.

Moreover, should content filtering fail for any reason, the solution can automatically block all outbound traffic.

"This functionality is very important to us for CIPA compliance," related Hutton.

The future: Application Intelligence and SuperMassive E10000 Series Firewall

The district plans to utilize the NSA E7500's Application Intelligence, Control and Visualization features for granular control and real-time visualization of applications. These capabilities will guarantee bandwidth prioritization and ensure maximum network security and productivity.

"We want to be able to allocate more bandwidth for high schools than elementary schools, for example," stated Hutton. "Plus, we'll be able to better manage application traffic between students and social networking sites like Facebook."

The district is interested in further leveraging application visualization for bandwidth management.

"We can now monitor bandwidth going across each interface in real time," said Daab.

"Prioritizing application traffic will be a big benefit for us going forward as we take on more latency-sensitive traffic, such as VoIP and LifeSize® video conferencing."

Looking forward, the district is evaluating the SonicWALL SuperMassive™ E10000 Series, designed for large networks to deliver scalability, reliability and deep security at multi-gigabit speeds.

"More students and teachers are going to use mobile devices and smartphones to access the district's network," acknowledged Daab. "SuperMassive E10000 Series would help us manage and secure that increased traffic without bottlenecking performance. With SonicWALL, we can stay at the forefront of this changing landscape."

SonicWALL's line-up of dynamic security solutions



NETWORK
SECURITY



SECURE
REMOTE ACCESS



WEB AND E-MAIL
SECURITY



BACKUP
AND RECOVERY



POLICY AND
MANAGEMENT

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DYNAMIC SECURITY FOR THE GLOBAL NETWORK™