

Laurens County School District #56 Speeds Applications with Exinda's Solutions



Background

Laurens County School District #56 of South Carolina is a growing school district. As the organization expands, the IT department wanted to ensure that the network and all applications continue to run smoothly. The network supports some 1,400 devices including a phone system, 30 servers, a security camera system with approximately 40 cameras and a door lock system. The school district also uses email to communicate with parents and streaming video for virtual classes linking different classrooms throughout the district. A large lab at one of the high schools also provides students with Internet access for academic use.

Network Performance Challenges

For security purposes, the IT staff installed a firewall to authenticate network users. The new firewall generated a great deal of traffic when users would log on to the network at 8:00 a.m. to begin work and again at 1:00 p.m. after lunch. In addition, the virus client at each workstation would immediately download the latest updates via FTP. This FTP traffic further congested the network pipe, causing network authentication to be delayed by up to 20 minutes. A similar problem occurred when students logged in to lab workstations. The workstations run an image restore software that returns the workstations to a previously set state at reboot. This software would trigger yet another virus signature download, consuming a great deal of network bandwidth and slowing other important applications.

The IT staff needed to find a way to shape their network traffic to control the amount of bandwidth that FTP downloads were consuming and to reserve bandwidth for other critical applications.

Based on advice from a systems integrator, ANCGroup, Laurens County School District #56 evaluated an Exinda 6700 WAN optimization solution at their central office. The Exinda 6700 appliance provides Quality of Service with the

"Exinda provides a great solution for the education market, which requires cost effective and reliable products that don't require a lot of expertise. With our Exinda solution, we've been able to shape network traffic and ensure all applications are running effectively."

— Lance Taylor,
Director of Instructional Technology,
Laurens County School District #56

ability to classify and prioritize network traffic at Layer 7. The Exinda solution guarantees a certain level of performance for mission critical applications, which is particularly important in addressing network congestion. The Exinda solution prohibits aggressive, lower priority applications from stealing bandwidth from critical applications. ANCGroup recommended Exinda touting it as a feature rich solution that is well priced and easy to use.

"We looked at other solutions but found them to be very expensive and having less functionality," said Lance Taylor, director of instructional technology at Laurens County School District #56. "Our systems integrator understood our need and explained why Exinda would be an excellent match. We were very pleased that ANCGroup took the time to really research what we wanted and provide an appropriate solution." *(over)*

NETWORK PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

- Controlled bandwidth consumption from FTP downloads
- Reserved bandwidth for critical applications
- Identified and blocked proxies to access restricted Web sites
- Gained application visibility
- Improved capacity planning

Continued: Laurens County School District #56 Speeds Applications with Exinda's Solutions

The Solution

Taylor and his staff installed the Exinda 6700 appliance in December, 2007 and immediately began realizing the benefits. With the Exinda 6700 appliance, they reserved 25 percent of the 10 Mbps Internet bandwidth for FTP traffic. This left the remaining 75 percent of bandwidth to handle other important applications such as streaming video. Both the staff and students could see a marked improvement in application response times. The IT staff also used Exinda's solution to identify and block students from using anonymous proxies to access Web sites that were deliberately blocked by the school district.

Taylor found Exinda's solution to be well suited for the education market, a market with limited IT resources. He believes the education market needs cost effective and reliable solutions that don't require a lot of expertise. Unfortunately, Taylor has found that many IT solutions don't fit that description.

The Exinda appliance gave Taylor the flexibility that server-based WAN optimization solutions did not. Exinda's graphical user interface was also highly intuitive. "We were delighted with the simplicity of the product. It's been very easy to install and use," added Taylor.

Exinda's monitoring and reporting capability helped Taylor and his staff have a better grasp of how all applications were consuming bandwidth. It also has given them valuable assistance on capacity planning. In February, 2008, Laurens County School District #56 upgraded to a 20 Mbps Internet pipe to accommodate the schools growth. With application visibility from Exinda, the IT staff knows they are using 50-60 percent of their Internet pipe. The IT staff is assured that there is substantial room to grow the amount of traffic on the network without having to upgrade their Internet pipe and incur additional expense.



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