Olentangy Local School District Turns to Exinda to Deliver Consistent Online Testing Experience

Olentangy Local School District

OLENTANGY SCHOOLS

GFI Software™

About the Client

OLENTANGY SCHOOLS℠
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Olentangy Local School District is the largest school district in Delaware County, Ohio, spanning 95 square miles with 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 3 high schools and 1 STEM academy. Olentangy has been designated as excellent by the Ohio Department of Education and the district's staff is committed to providing a high quality connected education for all of its 19,340 students.

Olentangy strives to ensure a rich and reliable online experience for its staff and students, and had recently upgraded its bandwidth to 500 Mbps to support their rapid growth and roll out a BYOD network. However, after seeing the impact of all the new devices on the network, coupled with migrating to online standardized testing, Olentangy turned to Exinda for help to deliver the best online learning experience possible with their available bandwidth.

The Challenge

"For a district of our size, we want to be able to prioritize traffic so streaming music all day in every class doesn't interfere with educational needs. We try to be proactive in making sure we use the network wisely and have enough bandwidth for what we need, when we need it, so we can get all students testing at the same time."

— Charlene Kolosky, Network Administrator, Olentangy Local School District

Olentangy Local School District is one of the fastest-growing school districts in Ohio, and is focused on providing a best-in-class, connected education across its twenty-four schools. When the state of Ohio embraced online testing, providing a predictable online testing experience quickly jumped to the top of the IT department's priority list. In addition to the over 14,000 district owned devices that are used daily to access the district's learning management system, Schoology, single sign-on solution LaunchPad by ClassLink, Google Apps for Education and Office 365, Olentangy also rolled out a BYOD network that can have as many as 9,000 connected devices on it at a time. With plans to open a fourth high school in the district on the horizon, Olentangy's IT department needed a way to ensure reliable learning and testing application performance and make the most out of their available bandwidth as they continue to grow.

✓ Prioritized online testing

✓ Controlled bandwidth usage

The Solution

"I think it's a testament to Exinda that we're able to run a district of our size on a 500 Mbps connection. We're still ranked very highly as far as the quality of our education in the State of Ohio and are providing what our students need with very limited access. With Exinda we are getting the most bang for our buck when it comes to bandwidth and we can show we are being good stewards of taxpayer dollars."

— Charlene Kolosky, Network Administrator, Olentangy Local School District

Prior to using Exinda, Olentangy was using only a content filter supplied by their ITC (Information Technology Center) to restrict access to certain applications. However, once their network load increased after implementing their BYOD network, they began investigating solutions that could help them manage the additional devices on their network. IT staff was adamant during their selection process that any new tools must be easy to use and provide deep insight into the total volume of activity on their network. After evaluating other solutions that were outside the district's budget or could only provide basic network monitoring, Olentangy's strategic technology partner, SentrySafe Services, recommended Exinda for its granular layer 7 application visibility. After a successful trial, SentrySafe helped Olentangy deploy an Exinda 8762 appliance and were able to monitor real time network usage and configure optimization policies right out of the box. Using Exinda's robust policy engine, Olentangy created virtual circuits to easily identify and manage traffic across all twentyfour locations. IT staff then set policies to guarantee the most bandwidth to their standardized testing applications during seasonal testing windows and limit the amount of bandwidth that can be used for streaming media, Apple software updates and online gaming.

The Results

"We looked at other solutions but they weren't cost effective or they couldn't get granular enough. We wanted something simple that could tell us what was happening on the network in layman's terms, so we don't have to go in and inspect every packet ourselves."

— Charlene Kolosky, Network Administrator, Olentangy Local School District

With Exinda in place, Olentangy's IT team now has complete visibility into their network and can see when excessive streaming or VPN access is taking place inside any of their school buildings. IT staff can even drill down further to pinpoint the exact user and device and intervene if there are any security threats or activities taking place outside of the district's acceptable use policy. The IT department has also leveraged Exinda's extensive reporting capabilities to generate and share daily usage reports with district stakeholders on top applications and overall bandwidth usage to show that they are doing their due diligence to conserve resources and use available bandwidth strategically. By carefully monitoring and prioritizing educational applications, Olentangy is able to ensure a reliable online experience for its over 22,000 users by strategically managing its available bandwidth.

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