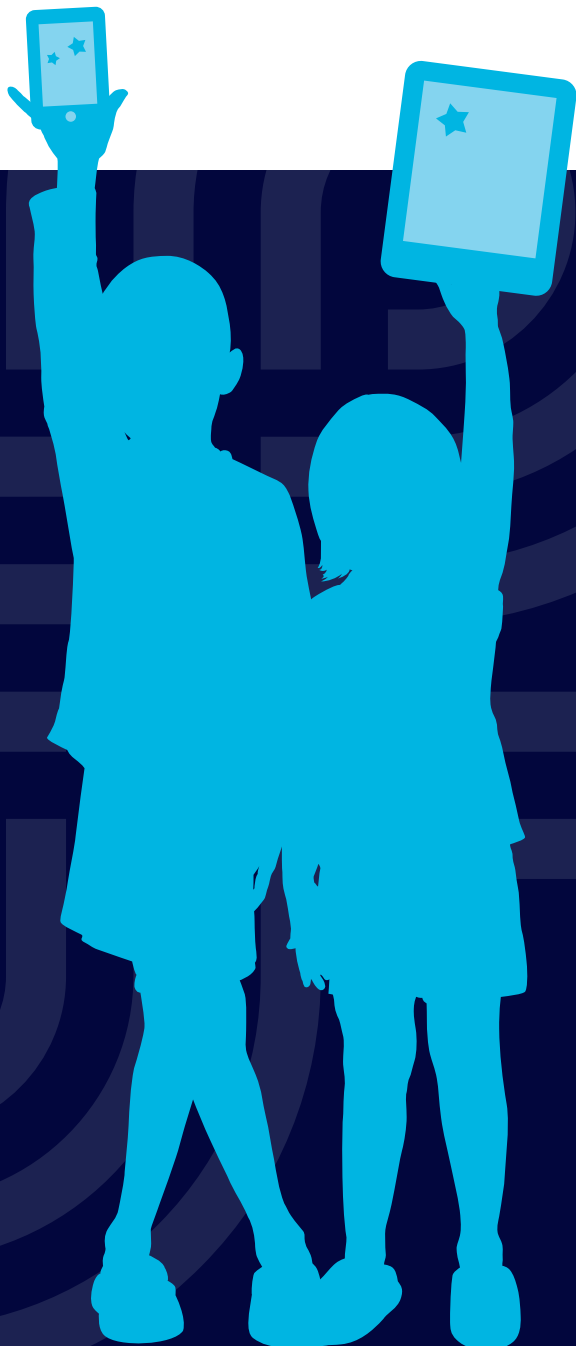


# Web Filtering in Today's Schools: Balancing IT and Educator Needs



To manage the school network, meet CIPA requirements, monitor AUP adherence, control bandwidth, and ensure safety and security of online users, IT departments rely on web filters.

To teach and engage students and arm them with the 21st century skills they need for success, educators turn to the Web—and then often get blocked by the filter.

Districts need to balance the needs of both sides.

# Blocking inappropriate content doesn't have to block learning

## Why Filter?

- Safety of students
- Security of network
- Identification of cyberbullying
- CIPA compliance
- Enforcement of Acceptable Use Policies
- Monitoring use of school resources
- Controlling traffic for bandwidth purposes
- Monitor mobile device usage

## Challenges of Web Filtering:

- Balancing security and safety with learning and education
- Meeting needs of various groups and individuals
- Ensuring overblocking doesn't hinder learning
- Ensuring underblocking doesn't impede safety and security
- Enforcing policies despite sophisticated proxy technologies
- Providing safe access to dynamic content and collaborative tools
- BYOD and mobile learning programs

## 10 Facts About CIPA and Web Filtering

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law passed by Congress in 2000, and updated and clarified since, to help ensure the safety of children accessing the Internet over school and library computers. Any organizations that receive funding through E-Rate or the Universal Service Fund must certify that they are meeting the requirements of CIPA.

1. CIPA requires a web filter for schools that receive E-Rate funding.
2. CIPA requires that schools block visual depictions that are pornographic, obscene, or harmful to minors.
3. CIPA requires a policy for educating users, including educating minors about appropriate online behavior and interacting with other individuals on social networking sites; a policy for Internet Safety; and monitoring the activity of minors.
4. CIPA requires filtering on school-owned devices (even mobile devices); clarification on requirements for student-owned devices used on campuses is forthcoming from the FCC.
5. Allowing YouTube videos is not a violation of CIPA.
6. Allowing social networking is not a violation of CIPA.
7. Schools won't lose E-Rate funding for adjusting filtering policies to unblock appropriate sites.
8. While teacher computers need to have a web filter installed, teachers and other adults don't need to be filtered (i.e., the ability for adults to override the filter is not a CIPA violation).
9. Schools have the authority to make local decisions about filtering policies.
10. Even the FCC recognizes the necessity and benefits of teaching students to be responsible digital citizens.

*Straight from the DOE: <http://mindshift.kqed.org/2011/04/straight-from-the-doe-facts-about-blocking-sites-in-schools/>*

*FCC Report: [http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily\\_Releases/Daily\\_Business/2011/db0819/FCC-11-125A1.pdf](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db0819/FCC-11-125A1.pdf)*

*"Our over-reaction to filtering is one of the biggest problems. Which is why I happen to love Lightspeed Systems."*

Alan November, November Learning

## Best Practices in Filtering

### Differentiate Policies

Teachers and students need to access different things to do their jobs. In addition, an elementary student requires access to different sites than a high school student. And one user who abuses online access shouldn't lead to overblocking across the board. Differentiated policies should allow you to set different levels of access and different filtering policies by user type, grade, and even individual.

### Trust Teachers

The people who work with students all day in the classroom, who create lessons and plan activities, who research a topic and dig up new resources to make it engaging for students, should also be trusted to access the Internet and determine what students can see for a specific lesson or class. Allowing several hours (let alone several days or weeks) for an adjustment to a filtering policy by IT is often a hindrance to learning—as well as a drain on IT resources. Aside from differentiated policies for teachers, trusting and empowering teachers can be accomplished safely with Overrides and other filtering features that allow teachers to bring resources together for student access (all under the monitoring of IT).

### Collaborate

Though the district network has shifted from being primarily an infrastructural element to a learning tool, educators often feel left out of decisions about what content has educational benefits and what filtering policies should block and allow. Making the creation of filtering policies a collaborative effort between IT, teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and even students can ensure that all needs are met—and varied viewpoints are considered.

### Be Transparent

When users know the district's filtering policy, the reasons behind it, and the specific reasons certain sites are blocked, they are generally more understanding and accepting. In addition to a transparent policy, users feel less frustrated about filtering when they are able to search a transparent database (that allows users to see how and why a site is categorized) and to recommend sites for review.

## Considerations When Choosing a Web Filter

### Does it *get* education?

Districts aren't businesses, and only a solution made for schools can properly categorize web sites and implement features that promote educational goals.

### Can it filter your mobile devices?

Even if you don't have a mobile learning program now, chances are you will eventually. And you probably already have students and staff bringing their own devices and using them on your network.

### What does it do about dynamic content and Web 2.0?

'Block it' or 'allow it' for broad categories of content isn't a good enough choice. Schools need a way to allow the educational aspects of Web 2.0 while blocking the inappropriate content.

### Can you customize it?

Your district is unique and you need a filter that you can granularly control to meet your specific needs.

### Do you **HAVE** to customize it?

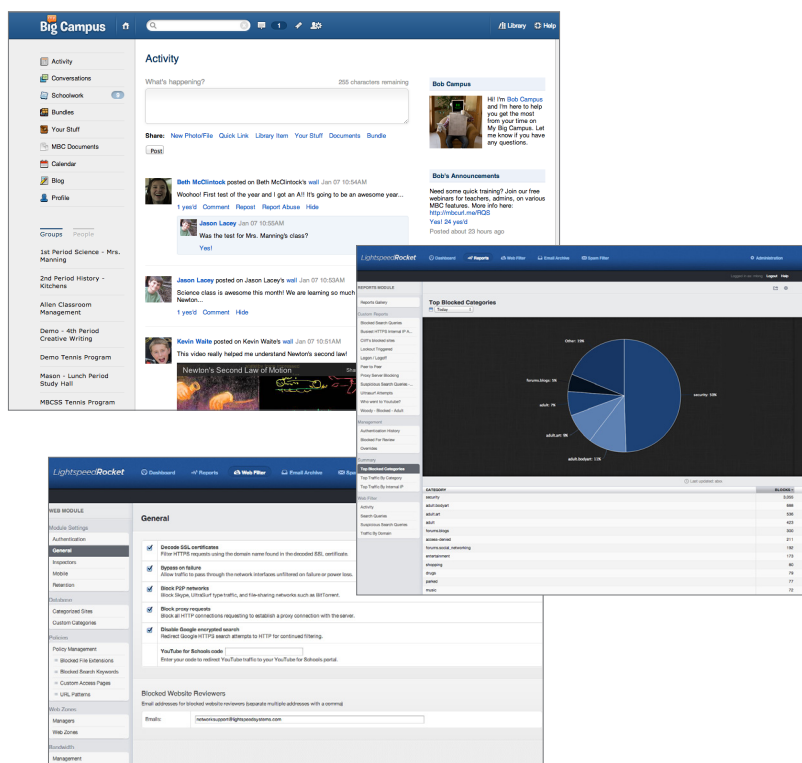
While customization is essential, so are default best practices—because extra time is one thing most IT teams don't have.

# The Lightspeed Systems Solution

It's time to rethink web filtering for schools. As much as a web filter needs to block inappropriate content, it also needs to ALLOW education. This means access to tools, resources, and people that can make learning engaging and real.

While those resources and tools already exist to a large degree, they're often found in disparate, unmanaged solutions that end up being silos of information or underused because they're overblocked.

The Lightspeed Systems solution is different. The Collaborative Filter combines communication, collaboration and resources with the filter—all in a single, easily managed solution.



## The Collaborative Filter includes:

- Web Filtering
- Mobile Filtering
- My Big Campus (LMS)
- Advanced Reporting (add-on)

It gives districts a safe, monitored, integrated way to access resources, collaborate, communicate, share information, and more—across groups and classes, schools, districts, towns, and even the whole My Big Campus community.

## What's in it for IT?

- CIPA compliance
- Transparent education-specific database
- Web traffic prioritization
- Easy management
- Granular reporting on activity
- Virus scanning
- Authenticated user access
- Differentiated policies
- Cross-platform desktop and mobile support
- Unlimited hosted file storage
- Hosted or on-site solution

## What's in it for educators?

- Differentiated access
- Educator-focused features like Overrides and Web Zones
- Collaborative groups, discussions, messaging, and other tools
- Access to videos and other often-blocked resources
- Online assignment posting, submission, and grading
- Online assessments and real-time results
- PLNs and cross-district topic groups
- Safe platform to teach digital citizenry
- Fun, engaging, easy-to-use interface
- FAQs, help videos, tutorials, chat support
- Standards-based content and lessons
- Reporting on student progress
- Easy communication with parents
- Hands-on practice of good digital citizenship

Find out more at [lightspeedsystems.com](http://lightspeedsystems.com)