Creating a more secure and safe environment for students and staff

The Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières (CSCDGR) is a francophone Catholic school board comprising 24 elementary schools, eight high schools, and three alternative education centers. The Board serves over 5,500 students across a 25,000 km² district in northern Ontario, Canada. The CSCDGR was created in 1998 with the amalgamation of several smaller school boards.

How can a school board best protect its staff and students from cyber risks?

The CSCDGR's cybersecurity modernization project was catalyzed by the successful rollout of its SD-WAN (software-defined wide-area network). Richard Fecteau, Director of IT at the Board emphasizes this success: "The SD-WAN implementation had improved the performance of our network and we were keen to do the same with our network security capabilities. When COVID came along, it added a sense of urgency which made us work faster and more efficiently than ever to achieve it."

The pandemic led to the need to support students and staff working remotely. The CSCDGR now provides all staff and students with laptops so they can work anywhere. "During the pandemic, we tripled the number of devices we provide our staff," explains Fecteau, "but that also means we tripled the associated security risks."

The key risks for the Board were that students could access inappropriate materials or engage in harmful activities online using these CSCDGR devices when outside of school networks. François Sauvé, Information and Communications Technology Supervisor for the Board specifies: "Since all students were now able to learn from home on our devices, we needed a security solution that would safeguard their well-being and protect our network from a higher threat risk."

CSCDGR CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE DE DISTRICT DES **GRANDES RIVIÈRES**

Profile

Industry	Region	Employees	Students
Education	Canada	1,400	5,500+

Click here to visit the CSCDGR website

Challenges
- Ensuring students are safe when using board-owned devices
- Increasing endpoint security to support remote learning

Solutions
- Netskope Next Generation SWG provides unmatched visibility and control
- Netskope Cloud Firewall secures outbound traffic
- Netskope CASB ensures against data exfiltration

Benefits
- Enables secure remote working for staff and students
- Protects students from harm online
- Provides granular web filtering and cloud app controls

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Security that's ready for anything

Leveraging the Netskope Next Gen SWG for advanced protection

When the Ontario Ministry of Education came out with its Reference Architecture 3.0, which provides best practice for network security, the CSCDGR undertook a cybersecurity pilot project.

Mr. Sauvé comments: "The Ministry launched the framework and provided us training on its use. It was clear that the architecture would help meet our security needs. With the Ministry's guidance, we were able to get up and running quickly to test recommended vendors. That's when we were introduced to Netskope."

Following extensive bench testing of market options, the CSCDGR selected Netskope to provide its Next Gen Secure Web Gateway (SWG), Cloud Firewall, and Cloud Access Security Broker (CASB). The Next Gen SWG helps prevent malware and detect advanced threats, while providing greater control through website filtering and visibility into traffic.

Further security capabilities are afforded by the Netskope CASB, which enables the Board to identify and manage the use of cloud applications. Finally, the Netskope Cloud Firewall helps the Board secure all ports and protocols with firewall rules for user and office egress traffic.

The Board implemented the solution gradually over a period of months to ensure that the user experience was not impacted and that all staff members understood the need for key policy changes.

Enhanced remote working and improved student welfare

With the help of Netskope, the Board has been able to maintain remote learning for students without worrying about security.

The CSCDGR benefits from a high degree of control when it comes to web filtering and cloud application usage. That means it can adjust its policies to fit the context; for example, by blocking streaming services during school hours but making them available during the evening.

The Board also benefits from the advanced data loss prevention that comes with the Netskope CASB. The security team can see when information is shared with unauthorized cloud apps and act accordingly. The API feature (a technology that allows automatic data transfer between two computerized tools) of the CASB also ensures that students are unable to publicly share school data without permission.

From a cost perspective, Netskope delivers greater functionality per dollar compared to the next-gen firewall features the Board previously used on its SD-WAN. Mr. Fecteau states: "Our SDWAN enabled us to adopt new approaches to security, including Netskope's cloud-based tools, allowing us to improve our cybersecurity significantly without adding to our overheads. We are pleased to offer a more secure and safe learning environment for staff and students thanks to Netskope!"

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Richard Fecteau, Director of IT, CSCDGR