How a Canadian school board is managing risk with Advanced Analytics

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

How can a school board move from opinion-based to data-driven decisions around its IT systems?

As any educator can tell you, managing a school is a challenging business. There are countless moving parts, and keeping on top of what's happening at any given time can be extremely difficult. This holds true for the IT systems used by schools. School boards like CSCDGR need a way to manage risk and stay on top of usage patterns, so they can be sure their investments in hardware and software are being used productively and appropriately by staff and students alike.

Richard Fecteau, Director of IT at the Board, explains: "As in any school district, the board needs to ensure that money isn't wasted, and existing investments are optimized at all times. This is increasingly difficult to achieve in a world where cloud applications are becoming standard, and endpoints are proliferating. There's a clear need for data insights on user behaviors so the board can make the best possible decisions around which software licenses to maintain and how best to allocate hardware."

With these goals in mind, CSCDGR turned to Netskope, already its cloud-based security solutions provider, for help.

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
- Cloud app resource management
- Poor visibility of device usage across schools
- Lack of insights to optimize resources

Solution
- Netskope Advanced Analytics for visibility and insights

Results
- Data-driven decision making at board level
- Cost savings from efficiencies identified in application and device usage
- Better risk management by reducing attack surface

Click here to learn more about how CSCDGR uses Netskope

"We've taken the emotion out of business decisions, and instead use data driven decisions around which software licenses to maintain and how best to allocate hardware."

Richard Fecteau, Director of IT, CSCDGR

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Managing application usage to reduce risk

Today, CSCDGR uses Netskope Advanced Analytics to better understand and manage cloud and hardware usage across its schools. Fecteau is emphatic about the value of Netskope Advanced Analytics: "The solution has helped us in so many ways. Had I known, I would have built it into our scope of work with Netskope much sooner," he says.

Through simple and intuitive dashboards, Netskope Advanced Analytics provides quick answers to the most important IT questions CSCDGR needs answered relating to cloud application and hardware usage. For example, what cloud storage applications are in use that the organization needs to secure? What devices are actively being used and are they secure? Netskope Advanced Analytics is thereby helping the board identify trends, zero in on areas of concern, and this data is used to better manage risk in their environment.

With Netskope Advanced Analytics in place, CSCDGR can make fully informed decisions regarding its IT investments and management based on granular, school-level data. "Netskope Advanced Analytics provides us with the intelligence we need to make evidence-based decisions. After a detailed analysis' using Advanced Analytics and many consultation sessions with stakeholders, the school Board decided to remove certain applications because of low usage which led to reducing the attack surface and reclaiming budget" says François Sauvé, Information Services Supervisor and Security Specialist, CSCDGR.

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François Sauvé, Information Services Supervisor and Security Specialist, CSCDGR

Visibility into device usage leading to cost savings and effective management

One the biggest benefits of Netskope Advanced Analytics is that the board is able to save significant sums of money by retiring cloud storage applications with persistently limited user uptake. At the same time, CSCDGR can use the solution to identify and notify the few committed users of these applications and support them through the transition to new software. By managing cloud app sprawl, it also helps the district save on security costs.

With Netskope, CSCDGR is also better able to marshal its hardware by providing visibility into endpoint usage. "We recently kicked off a tablet-based-project for teachers, but it seemed like we wouldn't have enough devices to go around," says Fecteau. "Netskope Advanced Analytics reports showed there were in fact a large number of devices that had been unused. We were therefore able to redistribute these devices rather than having to purchase new ones, which was a big savings for us."

CSCDGR is also using Netskope to assess the effectiveness of new cloud applications, feeding this intelligence to its professional development team. Whereas in the past technology projects may have failed because of poor uptake by staff, now the professional development team is aware of issues ahead of time and can better tailor and target their training programs.

Finally, Netskope Advanced Analytics is helping to ensure that users are not accessing inappropriate content online. Sauvé concludes: "Most inappropriate sites are blocked automatically, but with Netskope we can also see the most popular sites that are being accessed. We can then investigate if any of these looks suspicious. This helps us better protect our users."