

# CONTENT FILTERING OVERVIEW

## FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCILS

---



### Introduction

This brief report is designed to inform the school community councils of San Juan School District how the district's content filtering solution (called iBoss) filters internet content for all users on the district's network (both wired and wireless connections). This report comes in conjunction with the new Safe Technology and Digital Citizenship legislation from the state of Utah.

In any discussion of internet content filtering it is crucial to begin with the understanding that no content filtering solution will ever be able to completely filter out what most individuals regard as inappropriate content for a K12 setting--the internet is simply too large, complex, and ever-changing. While very beneficial in helping to try and keep out blatantly inappropriate content there will always be the risk of inappropriate content being made available. It is for this reason that we believe the most effective content filter is the one that students learn to develop at home and in the classroom as digital citizens.

This report will highlight our content filtering solution and items related to current practices of content filtering, digital citizenship, and capacity.

---

---

## **Filtering Solution**

Like all K12 school districts who received federal funding via the E-Rate program, San Juan School District is required to filter internet content. San Juan School District uses iBoss, a filtering solution used by most school districts in the state of Utah. iBoss is made available to districts through a contract with Utah Education and Telehealth Network (UETN). Under the agreement, UETN pays for the licensing element and districts are required to purchase the physical hardware and to maintain everything related to iBoss at the local level.

The district has three physical pieces of hardware for iBoss--two filtering devices and a reporting device. The two filtering devices allow us to have redundant content filtering should one of the two have a failure and the reporting device allows us to report on the use iBoss allows.

All internet traffic that transpires on the district's network (both wired and wireless) pass through iBoss and are filtering based on the current settings and capacity of the filtering devices. If a search or site is tagged as inappropriate based on the iBoss settings the search or site is either blocked or certain portions of a search or site are filtered out. For example, iBoss will do its best (remember that no content filtering solution will ever catch everything that may be deemed inappropriate) to remove images from a Google Image search that have been tagged as inappropriate.

The district's network is divided into three main segments: one for staff, one for students, and one for guests. Settings, adjustments, restrictions, etc. that iBoss allows for are made based on these three main segments.

## **Other Content Filtering Tools**

While iBoss is *the* content filtering solution for the district, other tools available can assist. For instance, search engines like Google and Bing have provided schools with the ability to enforce what they call "safe search" which can help filter out inappropriate content when they are used on the district's network (while acknowledging they are not completely accurate either).

Another tool we have in place is a program called LanSchool which is installed on almost every student (Windows) computer and allows teachers (who choose to use) the ability to control content on computers in a lab or classroom as needed. Hapara is another tool the district has just started

---

piloting with some of its classroom-based 1:1 Chromebook initiatives and it provides the same ability as LanSchool (plus a number of other tools and options).

All of these tools definitely help to try and filter out as much inappropriate content as they can but as stated in the introduction, the best filter is the one students learn to develop at home and at school. Learning to become a responsible digital citizen is an active process and resources are available for parents and schools.

### **Digital Citizenship**

UETN has provided a resource called NetSafe Utah for parents, educators, and students that focuses mostly on how to be safe online (which is definitely part of being a good digital citizen) and they have made the recommendation that each school have a site leader who is trained in teaching the NetSafe program to others at their school. (A few schools have someone that is certified to do this and a goal should be for each school to have at least one person trained in the NetSafe resources and the Southeast Service Center can be a point of contact to help facilitate this.) Learning to become a responsible digital citizen is an active and ongoing process and this resource is one of many that can assist in teaching students.

We believe that NetSafe Utah is a great tool but we also we believe that schools will find the most success in teaching digital citizenship to all students when each staff member--at each grade level at each school--models, embraces, and explicitly teaches what it means to be a responsible digital citizen on an ongoing basis to their students.

### **iBoss Reporting and Capacity**

Even with all of the filtering and focus on digital citizenship and responsible use, unfortunately some users choose to act irresponsibly when on the district's network and there are consequences in place. For students, most of the consequences are handled at the school level but these can be elevated based on severity. Schools have to balance the irony of potentially revoking student access to online resources in a time when so much of what they do is online which can be a difficult task.

---

Though more of a rare occurrence, staff can also act irresponsibly on the district's network and when this happens they are reported immediately to the human resources office where it is determined what happens next.

The iBoss reporter typically holds about three weeks worth of information that it can process and report regarding users, searches, sites visited, etc. We have full control over the iBoss settings as they currently exist on the most updated version of the firmware on the iBoss hardware and firmware updates are fairly consistent as the system tries to fix bugs in previous versions to improve and to try and catch up with the ever-changing landscape that is the internet.