smoothwall

The Web You Want

Online Safety in K-12
Safeguarding from Smoothwall

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The internet is rapidly evolving, but so is bullying. Students are now connected beyond their classrooms and their social value is continually measured by the amount of Friends, 'Likes', and Followers they garner. While the internet and social media can be used in positive ways, it has also resulted in the phenomenon of cyberbullying, and in some cases, suicide.

Cyberbullying has almost doubled in the past ten years, from 18% to 34%, and the use of the internet as a vehicle for abuse is becoming a growing concern. Research suggests that victims of bullies who use the Internet to harass and mock may be more likely to develop low self-esteem which, in turn, can have severe consequences for student well-being and psychological adjustment (Palermiti et al., 2017), including an increased risk of suicide. Peer victimization is a risk factor for child and adolescent suicidal ideation and attempts. Approximately 20% of adolescents seriously consider suicide, and between 5% and 8% of adolescents in the United States attempt suicide within a year; overall, suicide is one of the most frequent causes of adolescent mortality worldwide (Eaton et al., 2006).

If cyberbullying is not handled appropriately, it may lead to negative emotional responses such as self-harm and suicide. Not only do Technology Directors and School Administrators need to worry about cyber security and technical efficiencies, they now have the increasing responsibility of protecting students from the harms of the internet. Administrative action is now required to set a fine line between providing internet access for education, and preventing students from coming into harm when using it. It has been mentioned that schools should use evidence-based practices to reduce bullying (Ortega et al., 2012).

As a Tech Director, it is increasingly becoming the responsibility of the school to provide the right technical tools to protect children from harm. Blocking content is no longer satisfactory, the need to measure intent and activity behind a students behavior is imperative to build evidence and monitor them effectively. Responsibility for student safety is no longer just the responsibility of the teachers, or principals, but everyone involved in the delivery of education. As internet use in educational settings increases, so does the importance of administrative action to ensure safe use.

The key change required to move from just a technical setup but to a solution that includes online safety for students, is to move from locked-down systems or just URL filters that block content, to systems that manage both content and also the intent of a user's web search.

Smoothwall's vision is to provide all K-12 schools with tools which don't just block, but effectively use the web filtering engine to look at trends and patterns of behavior, to show intent behind a student's online actions. This can lead to prevention against suicide or violent activity.

<p align="center">#cutting #suicide #proana
#probul #promia #sue #dallas
#deb #dan #ed #thinspo
#suicidal #sam #cat #ana</p>

This word map shows keywords that may be used in student web searches around suicide and self-harm. Research by Seattle Children's Research Institute, found that young people often used coded hashtags to talk about self-harm, suicide and abuse on social media. Students often turn to the internet when they are feeling depressed as a result of cyberbullying, and use the internet to talk to others or search for a solution. Although speaking to an adult is promoted to students as the best method, less than 30% of students actually admit to speaking to an adult about bullying (StopBullying.gov). With this in mind, a form of passive monitoring is critical to identify vulnerable children.

What can you do to help?

Smoothwall has developed Safeguarding, a suite built with child protection in mind. Working alongside your content-aware web filtering rules, you are also able to analyze the web visits of your students and categorize those that cause a concern. A simple block is no longer good enough, particularly if you want to give students access to the knowledge they need to succeed. The Safeguarding suite allows you to provide a combination of blocking event-based activities while monitoring the intent-based activities. The purpose of the Safeguarding suite is to build a profile of your users, showing you both one-off events that cause concern, and a picture of activity over time that could result in concern in the future.

In order to do this effectively, first we had to define intent and what this means. The first instances are the things that the student might be exposed to, that enable us to identify if they are being 'drawn into' something. A good example of this might be familiar search terms, and recognising if they are searches we would want to prevent against.

More important than search terms alone, are search terms followed by domain requests —this starts to build a story; someone searched for something, then went to a suggested site. In addition to where they went, what did they contribute on the site? We are able to look at post requests within a site, including accessing social media platforms, and

then build a picture of how a student is behaving online. Once we understand how we can use all of this information to monitor for student safety concerns, you recognize the powerful capabilities of Smoothwall's web filter and how you can use it to take action and prevent suicide, self-harm, or future cyberbullying.
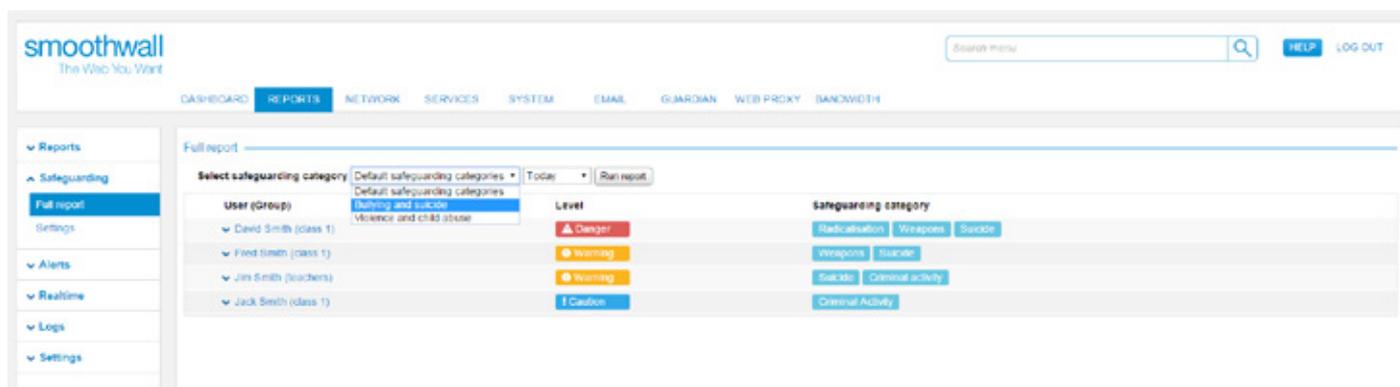
Introducing Smoothwall's Safeguarding suite

The Safeguarding suite is built up of 7 built-in rulesets to flag areas that cause concern or harm to a child in your protection. These rulesets are: Suicide, Bullying, Abuse, Substance Abuse, Criminal Activity, Radicalization and Adult Content. Using these rulesets and built-in reports, alerts of any intent-based activity surrounding these concerns are delivered in real-time.

The Safeguarding reporting tool allows the System Administrator to run reports using any of the rulesets to view those users who have breached them during specified time periods. A color-coded indicator shows the severity of the breaches, ranging from advisory, to warning, to critical. These look at the student activities, beginning with first instance search terms and web access, classifying them into certain categories to assign a severity rating.
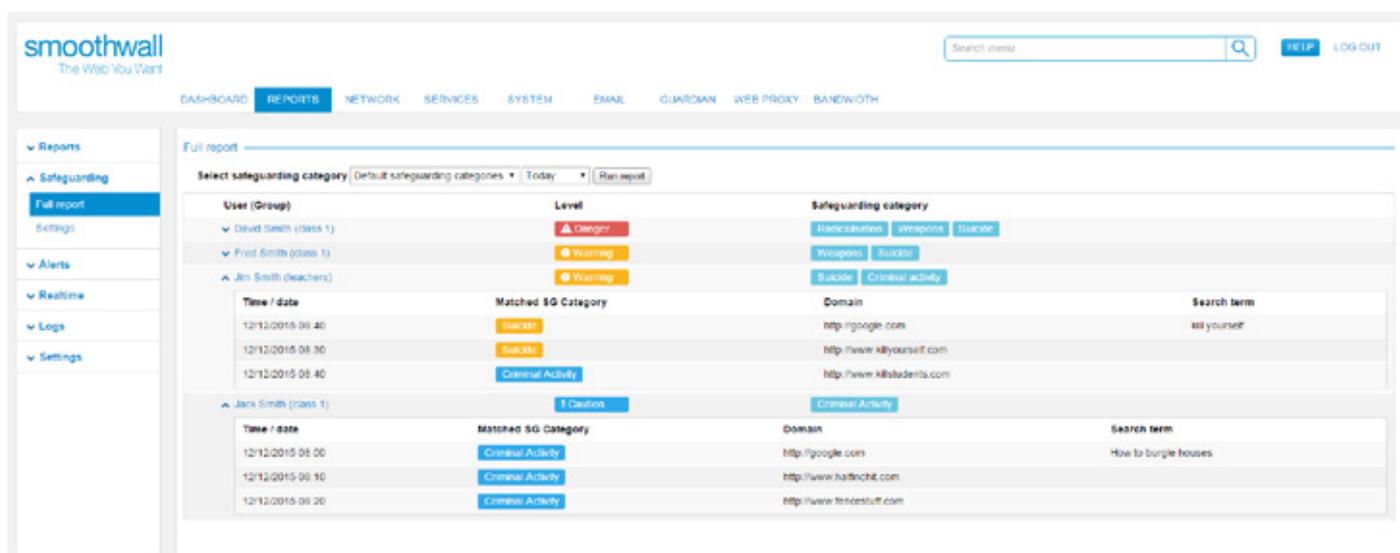
The Safeguarding Full Report is ordered by user breaches: first by level of breach severity, then by number of breaches. The automatic ranking system enables the System Administrator to immediately identify the student who is likely to be most at risk. Most importantly, the analysis is not only performed on blocked data, it's done on both allowed and blocked data, recognising that blocking alone is not the appropriate solution in detecting intent-based activity, which may be acceptable in isolation.

Safeguarding also provides a mechanism for a detailed view. If there is a particular student where a report raises a severity of a breach which is high enough to cause concern, you will at that point be able to drill down into the chain of events and web searches and/or visits that caused that particular breach. Clicking on an individual user gives a detailed user activity report, showing any breaches within the report period selected.

Within the user activity report, clicking on a breach expands the view to include all browsing history either side of the breach. This detailed report provides the System Administrator with the context to a user's activities, helping them determine if intent is present.

Safeguarding notifications allow reports on a group of students to be emailed to the responsible individuals in the school. The System Administrator is able to set up daily, weekly or monthly email notifications for a chosen ruleset, and select notification recipients.

For your free demo of our innovative Safeguarding suite, and to find out more information about how we can help you to protect your students from cyberbullying, suicide and more, get in touch.

About Smoothwall

Smoothwall is a global web filtering and firewall provider, who have pioneered the development of real-time content aware filtering, and more recently, the Safeguarding reporting suite. Our solutions are used to provide online safety to 2.5 million students around the world. As a market leader in education, we pride ourselves on understanding the needs of the K-12 market. Our Safeguarding reporting suite has been specifically designed to answer ongoing online safety concerns surrounding suicide and student violence.

For more information regarding our revolutionary web filtering and Safeguarding products, contact us today.

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