securly

A Study in EdTech Success, Eastern Carver County Schools, Minnesota



At a glance

9,300 Students

599 teachers

14 schools

Demographics:

76% White
10% Hispanic
5% African-American
5% Two or more races
4% Asian

Challenge

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced Eastern Carver County Schools into 100% remote learning, teachers had to be sure students were staying engaged and on track.

Solution

The district tapped Securly to help protect students online, provide parental peace of mind, and help teachers lead classes with confidence.

Personalization leads to motivation

Eastern Carver County Schools (ECCS) in Minnesota prides itself on offering personalized learning to its students. Students have the freedom to design the way they showcase their learning based on individual styles, experiences, passions, and needs, and educators are given the tools and training to transform their schools into places where learners are motivated, excited, and engaged.

Located on the edge of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, this rapidly growing suburban district continually challenges its educators to better understand their students in order to help them progress to the next level. *"Every student can excel in many different ways,"* says Craig Larsen, information systems administrator. *"At our Integrated Arts Academy, for instance, high school students integrate culinary, visual arts, and design into core subjects. Our overall focus is on getting students to understand—not just memorize facts."*

Thanks to community support, a Security and Technology Levy first passed in 2013 and then renewed in 2019 supplied the necessary funds for a number of products and services that helped the district link technology with security. From there, ECCS launched a program over the next three years to give every student in grades 1 through 12 a Chromebook and every teacher his or her own laptop. In 2020, the Chromebook program extended to kindergarten. *"When COVID struck, from a technology perspective it was easy to pivot to distance learning,"* says Larsen. *"We had the infrastructure in place to support 10,000 students online at the same time."*

A strong web filter lays the foundation

When the district began sending Chromebooks home in the 2014-15 school year, they asked parents to be responsible for their children's online safety. The parents didn't push back; however, when Larsen heard about Securly Filter from other schools and learned what the program does with locally managed, DNS-based filtering, he knew immediately

that this was what the district needed. ECCS quickly purchased and implemented Filter. *"It's a very powerful tool and it worked great,"* says Larsen. *"When you have students taking Chromebooks home and bringing them back in, Securly is extremely helpful."*

Giving parents powerful tools for devices at home

Another win for parents occurred when ECCS added Securly Home to the mix, allowing families to customize control over their child's school device when it leaves school grounds. *"A lot of districts and teachers are hesitant to do this, but parents love it and are very appreciative of having visibility into what their children are doing at home and at school."* Whether a parent is completely hands off, fully engaged, or somewhere in between, Larsen says he can handle all of it with one seamless tool.

> *"Giving parents visibility and letting them make choices with Securly Home has been great. Even better, parents might wonder why their son is on YouTube all the time in a certain class and can ask their child or the teacher. Good questions come from this visibility, and with districts trying to be as transparent as possible in the learning environment, tools like Securly Home are a huge help."*

Empowering teachers to keep students focused on learning

After the success of Filter and Home, the district purchased Securly Classroom, which helps teachers keep students focused and on task by monitoring their Chromebooks during class. For the first year, teachers didn't take full advantage of Classroom, but the COVID-19 pandemic spurred a district-wide adoption by most teachers.

When the district saw how much students were struggling to stay engaged during distance learning, Larsen began opening Classroom up for a few teachers. *"Teachers overwhelmingly told us it was a game changer. They loved seeing what their students were doing and helping anyone who is having problems or not engaging with the material."* Even when districts use Google Meet, as ECCS does, teachers cannot see what students are doing on their screens. Classroom gives them a window into student devices. In fact, teachers will continue using Classroom when students return to in-person learning.

Support of a true partner

Vendor relationships can be tricky, but Larsen says Securly's support staff is as good as it gets. When he first installed Classroom, for instance, he didn't remove old plug-ins, which inhibited proper usage of the software. "Securly support had seen it before and knew what was probably wrong. We jumped on an online call and quickly worked through all the hurdles."

Overall, Larsen says the Securly team is very responsive, which is extremely important when working with a tool that's used in nearly every class. "One of the cool things Securly implemented in Classroom, based on district feedback, is the ability to have individually named student groups." For the ECCS students who struggle the most to stay on task, the district created a group called Allow Only; all internet access is denied except for a few sites. Larsen says they add students into that group rather than forcing teachers to continually block individual sites. "You'd never catch up that way," he says. "This works well for a handful of students who are really struggling. It's an example of Securly listening to its users."

Another example of Securly's responsiveness is the company's work to provide more data-driven insights with its products. ECCS can currently pull up reports about individual students and will soon be able to run district-level reports. In the meantime, ECCS is proud to be able to give parents the access to truly observe what is going on with their children, while allowing district leaders to see what's happening at home and be able to work with teachers and counselors to assist. Teachers feel empowered and are grateful that the district has given them the tools they need to deliver a personalized, safe experience for every student.

About Eastern Carver County Schools
Eastern Carver County Schools is a suburban district in the southwest suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul. It's a rapidly growing district that gives students the power and tools to shape their education.