

# Filling in the Blanks - School Board Reinforces Network with Secure Wi-Fi

I  
WILL  
ONLY  
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Wi-Fi



## CHALLENGE

Building, maintaining, and enhancing the technologies that increase academic achievement for all students – this is the primary objective for Franklin County Board of Education’s IT department, serving students in Northwest Alabama. To support this goal, Franklin County schools require a high-performing, full featured network security solution, in addition to fast, reliable, and secure wireless access for students and staff. As a largely rural community, buildings with internet access are few and far between. Tim Burks, Network Administrator for FCBOE, estimates that roughly 80 percent of students do not have internet access within their home. This makes providing secure internet and Wi-Fi at the school - essential for project research and emerging learning aides - all the more critical. FCBOE offers Google classes in every one of the schools throughout their district, and has started deploying Google Chromebooks to support the curriculum, mandating the need for Wi-Fi access even further. Providing Wi-Fi is one thing, but keeping access secure is a much greater challenge.

## SOLUTION

FCBOE first turned to WatchGuard in 2000, choosing the platform for its all-in-one solution set and the ease with which policies can be established. The board has deployed numerous WatchGuard appliances in the many years since, currently utilizing an XTM 1525-RP. Tim has added a Security Suite subscription to the firewall, a collection of best in class security services that includes Intrusion Prevention Service, Application Control, Gateway Antivirus, spamBlocker, WebBlocker and Reputation Enabled Defense. A large fleet of AP200 wireless

### CLIENT

Franklin County Board of Education

### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

400 at 7 locations

### INDUSTRY

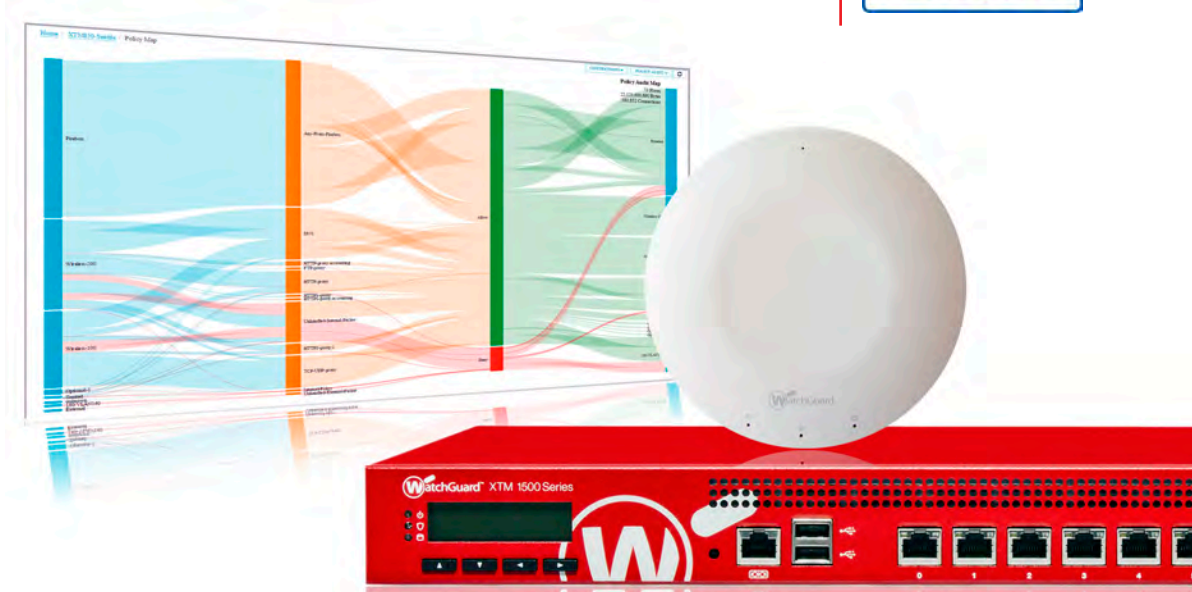
Education

### REGION

USA

### WATCHGUARD PRODUCTS

- AP200
- XTM 1525-RP
- Dimension



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access points is deployed throughout FCBOE's seven locations, offering the dependable, secure wireless access so essential to carry out daily operations within the schools. Dimension, WatchGuard's cloud based logging and reporting tool, distills all wired and wireless network activity into key trends and events, providing valuable insight into student internet usage that may require a conversation or policy adjustment.

## RESULTS

By extending the best-in-class security services provided by the firewall appliances, the AP200s have dramatically improved the wireless environment throughout the school district. Having tried a variety of wireless APs from other vendors in the past, WatchGuard's AP200s have been a game changer for FCBOE. The Gateway Wireless Controller, available through WatchGuard's Fireware Web UI and WatchGuard System Manager, allows Tim to monitor the connection status and activity on all WatchGuard AP devices throughout the network, and has been particularly valuable. In Tim's words, "We had a pretty large deployment of Brocade APs. As soon as I found out about the controller feature, it made me want to switch to WatchGuard. I think we ended up buying about 100 right off the bat. We found out that if we wanted a controller for Brocade, it would cost us about \$60,000 – just on the controller! Not to mention those Brocade APs were costing us about twice as much." Reflecting on the central management afforded by WatchGuard's operating system, Tim noted "I can use that one device to manage everything that I need. I've dealt with places in the past with different controllers for different devices. With WatchGuard I can take care of everything from central management, from one place, and I'm good."

The secure wireless access extended throughout the schools certainly does not go unutilized by staff and students. "Now a days, every student has a phone in their pocket, or they're carrying a tablet. But with us being as rural as we are, 80 percent of students don't have internet at home." To that end, the school board has made it known to the public that they always have at least one to two APs on the edge of the school grounds, (on a VLAN that can't touch the internal network) so that if someone needs Wi-Fi access, they know where to turn. "We'll have students sitting in the parking lot just to connect to the internet," remarked Tim.

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*-Tim Burks, Network Administrator,  
Franklin County Board of Education*

## NEXT STEPS

Looking to the future, FCBOE will be expanding their secure wireless network with the addition of even more access points, this time in the form of AP300s, WatchGuard's latest wireless AP offering. Their reliability, security, and ease of use make them an easy choice for Tim. "The biggest thing is, we have a large network. It's just me for technology staff. I manage 3,500 appliances here. If things aren't easily managed and controllable, I couldn't do it. And the school board can't afford to hire a huge staff. It's essential to have a system and appliances that are easily manageable, and that's what WatchGuard does for us. I've been using WatchGuard products since 1999, and it's constantly getting better and better."

## ABOUT WATCHGUARD

WatchGuard® Technologies, Inc. is a global leader of integrated, multi-function business security solutions that intelligently combine industry standard hardware, best-of-breed security features, and policy-based management tools. WatchGuard provides easy-to-use, but enterprise-powerful protection to hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide. WatchGuard is headquartered in Seattle, Wash. with offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America. To learn more, visit [www.watchguard.com](http://www.watchguard.com)

