Hall County Schools future-proofs IT infrastructure and saves up to 50% in costs

School district chooses SonicWall SuperMassive and Aventail to support BYOD and Learning Management System initiatives

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C.J. Daab
Technology Support Coordinator

Customer profile

Company	Hall County Schools
Industry	Education
Country	United States
Employees	30,800
Website	www.hallco.org

Challenge

- Inefficient and ineffective web content filtering
- Outdated firewall technology
- Need for equipment consolidation

Solution

- SonicWall SuperMassive Next-Generation Firewall in High Availability
- SonicWall Aventail SRA EX9000
- SonicWall Content Filtering Service
- SonicWall Application Intelligence and Control

Benefits

- Real-time scanning of all network traffic
- Application intelligence, control and visualization
- High performance multi-core architecture
- Clientless secure remote access

Hall County Schools is a public school district in Hall County, Georgia. Based in Gainesville, the district employs 4,800 teachers and staff members, supporting up to 26,000 students attending 21 elementary schools, six middle schools and seven high schools. Hall County Schools purchased SonicWall® SuperMassive™ E10400 Next-Generation Firewall and Aventail® E-Class EX9000 Secure Remote Access (SRA) solutions to add the power, performance and flexibility it needs to secure and future-proof its WAN.

"SonicWall saved us up to 50 percent in costs. Our savings have been two-fold, both in consolidating appliance costs and in reducing overhead of networks administration."

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The challenge: influx of student devices and management of multiple point solutions

The district has been challenged with the bring-your-own device (BYOD) development and sees as many as 6,000 - 9,000 student and employee devices on its network at any one time.

"More students and teachers are going to use mobile devices and smartphones to access the district's network," acknowledged C.J. Daab, technology support coordinator, Hall County Schools. "By letting individuals bring their own technology into schools, we offset purchasing costs. SonicWall gives us the load management tools to control these devices more effectively and helps support our district-wide BYOD initiative."

In conjunction, many students and teachers use smartphones and tablets to access the district's cloud-based learning management system, the HallConnect platform. To enable authentication and support this initiative, the district sought to deploy remote access technology.

To secure its network, the district had previously deployed Cisco® ASA firewalls and Websense® content filtering, in addition to other disparate point products. Over time, however, the district became increasingly dissatisfied with these solutions.

"Students learned to bypass Websense on the SSL side, and we needed a solution that could block the proxy sites in order to maintain CIPA compliance," said Jeremy Hutton, network engineer at Hall County Schools. "On top of that, managing black lists and white lists on the Cisco ASA was cumbersome."

In addition to content filtering and ease-of-management, the district sought robust monitoring and reporting, single sign-on (SSO) for up to 20,000 users with web authentication and CIPA compliance.

The solution: SonicWall Aventail EX9000 and SuperMassive E10400

To address the need for secure remote access, the district decided to implement a new SonicWall E-Class Aventail EX9000 solution.

"SonicWall committed dedicated resources to solving our challenges. Our decision to go with the Aventail EX9000 is a testament to SonicWall's commitment to our business relationship, as well as its flexibility to develop new features tailored for our needs with quick execution," added Daab.

The E-Class SRA EX9000 offers the district full-featured, easy-to-manage, clientless or thin-client "in-office," integrated 10GbE connectivity for up to 20,000 concurrent users from a single appliance. E-Class SRA enhances productivity and business continuity with policy-enforced remote access

to network resources from Windows®, Windows Mobile, Apple® Mac OS®, iOS, Linux® and Google Android® devices. Based on the latest multi-core technology, the SRA EX9000 can provide over 8 Gbps of SSL performance.

"We want to bring education to students on their terms," noted Smith. "The EX9000 will let students and teachers work remotely at their own pace and style. A teacher can access other schools around the world, or teach at multiple locations without leaving the classroom. It will also protect our SharePoint and provide access to remote support staff who did not have it before."

In order to protect its network, maintain CIPA compliance and ensure scalability for its growth, the district decided to implement E7500 and E10400 solutions.

Hall County Schools evaluated filtering solutions from Websense, iPrism, Cymphonix®, Blue Coat® and other vendors before purchasing an integrated SonicWall E-Class Network Security Appliance (NSA) E7500 solution from their Dell reseller. Based on network growth and positive experience with previous SonicWall solutions, Hall County decided to upgrade to the SonicWall SuperMassive E10400 solution in High Availability.

"The SuperMassive E10400 had all the features we wanted, plus others we didn't have before, like integrated gateway security services, SSO and application intelligence and control," said Jay Smith, senior network engineer, Hall County Schools. "SonicWall allowed us to consolidate appliances and manage everything through a single interface."

"SuperMassive was our choice due to its flexible architecture, performance and scalability," said C.J. Daab, technology support coordinator at Hall County Schools. "The fact that it has a 96 core processor and scales to the size of our district gives us confidence that we can grow well into the future."

"The SuperMassive 10400 was the best fit for our environment today, however, we have the capability to add more horsepower as our needs grow and scale to a 10800. The ease-of-use on SuperMassive makes it far superior to Cisco and other products we looked at," cited Hutton. "It's all done with one easy-to-navigate interface. I don't have to log into a second or third box to add something."

The SonicWall SuperMassive E10000 Series is designed for large networks to deliver scalability, reliability and deep security at multi-gigabit speeds.

The result: powerful security that scales for the future

"SonicWall saved us up to 50 percent in costs," affirmed Daab. "Our savings have been two-fold, both in consolidating appliance costs and in reducing overhead of networks administration."

The district can configure and control content filtering from the SuperMassive E10400, eliminating the costs of a separate dedicated filtering server as well as three point solutions.

"SuperMassive has not only increased performance, but also given us flexibility in segmenting traffic," said Daab. "We can now manage and secure increased traffic without bottlenecking performance."

> "With SonicWall, we can stay at the forefront of this changing landscape. We have a great business relationship with SonicWall and its customer service and engineering support was outstanding."
>
> *C.J. Daab*
> *Technology Support Coordinator*

The district plans to utilize the SuperMassive E10400 application intelligence and control to prioritize and throttle application traffic for social media resources such as YouTube, Twitter and videoconferencing as latency-sensitive traffic, such as VoIP and LifeSize® video conferencing. These capabilities will guarantee bandwidth prioritization and ensure maximum network security and productivity.

"We want to be able to allocate more bandwidth for high schools than elementary schools," stated Hutton. "SuperMassive gives us the horsepower to support the 100-plus app rules we need in place. App control allows us to place restrictions on the proxy sites that students were accessing, and lets us flexibly create multiple policies for social apps like Facebook, so that admin or other staff can access resources to track incidents, while students are still restricted."

Mobile access requirements have also been addressed and the district's remote iPhone and Android users can easily connect using the downloadable SonicWall Mobile Connect™ app.

"I've been very happy with it," acknowledged Smith. "It's straightforward, easy to use, and works well."

The district has been very satisfied with SonicWall support.

"Customer and engineering support differentiates SonicWall from the competitors," remarked Hutton. "We always get called back in a timely manner with quick resolutions. The developers are willing to do whatever it takes to make things happen."

"The fact that SonicWall is able to back up what it says to the marketplace goes a long way," affirmed Daab. "With SonicWall, we can stay at the forefront of this changing landscape. We have a great business relationship with SonicWall, and its customer service and engineering support was outstanding. They have spoiled us for other vendors."

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