

Lyon County School District Board Memo

Date: May 26, 2026
To: Board of School Trustees
From: Harman Bains, Executive Director of Operations
Re: District Wide Internet Access

Recommendation:

The Board of Trustees approve an update on the district wide internet access and its restrictions for students, teachers, administrators, and employees.

Background Information:

Lyon County School District students and staff are protected by two filtering systems: Google SafeSearch and ContentKeeper. Together, these tools form the foundation of the District's approach to safe and appropriate internet use, and each plays a distinct role depending on the device and network in use.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that no filtering system is infallible. Regardless of how many technical safeguards are layered onto District devices and networks, no tool can fully replicate the value of education at home. Parents and guardians remain the most important factor in shaping responsible digital citizenship, and consistent reinforcement of appropriate online behavior outside of school will always outperform any filter the District can deploy. Ultimately, each student is responsible for their own conduct online, and the District's filtering tools are intended to support, not replace, the personal accountability expected of every user accessing District systems.

The District has structured its systems to provide the strongest reasonable protections for students and staff, while also recognizing the importance of learning to navigate the broader digital world and its associated best practices. Exposure to age-appropriate online environments, paired with direct instruction in safe and ethical use, prepares students for the realities they will face beyond graduation. Once a student leaves the District, the protections afforded by these filtering systems no longer apply, and the skills developed through both home and school instruction become the primary defense against the risks of an unrestricted digital environment. For that reason, the District views digital citizenship education and technical filtering as complementary, each essential to producing graduates who are equipped to protect themselves long after they have left Lyon County School District classrooms.

Active 24/7: Google SafeSearch

Google SafeSearch is a feature within Google Search and Google Images that automatically filters pornography and other potentially offensive or inappropriate content. It is installed on every district device and remains active on all Chromebooks at all times, regardless of whether the student is at home, at school, or connected to any outside network. This ensures that a baseline level of content protection travels with the device and is not dependent on the student's physical location.

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Active on District Owned Devices and District Network: ContentKeeper

ContentKeeper is the district's web filtering application and is fully compliant with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Unlike Google SafeSearch, ContentKeeper is only active when a device is connected to the district network. When students are logged in and operating on district infrastructure, they benefit from two layers of security and filtering working in tandem, significantly strengthening the district's ability to restrict inappropriate content.

ContentKeeper also reclassifies websites on a consistent basis as they can be ever changing, while the inception of a website can be innocuous it can change with time. For example, if a website is created showing pictures butterflies in a terrarium nothing prevents the owner of the website from changing this to be pictures that would be "not safe for work" later.

"District Network" refers to any wired or wireless connection provided, maintained, and authenticated by the District within its school buildings and facilities. This definition does not extend to VPNs, personal hotspots, or any other outside connection a student may use to bypass district infrastructure.

Student Search History

The most common misconception our Information Technology (IT) department addresses concerns the nature of a student's search history. While a student may enter any term, phrase, or query into Google, YouTube, or other websites, the act of searching does not mean the student actually views the full range of results that an unfiltered search would otherwise return.

When a term is entered into a search field, that term is recorded in the student's search history regardless of the outcome. The district's layered filtering environment, which includes Google SafeSearch and ContentKeeper, intercepts and blocks inappropriate results before they reach the student. For example, a student may type an explicit term into a search bar, and that term will appear in their search history, but the results page itself is filtered so that the inappropriate content associated with that query is not delivered to the device.

The level of filtering applied depends on where the search occurs. For searches conducted off the district network, results are restricted to those Google SafeSearch deems appropriate, ensuring a baseline level of content protection on district-managed devices regardless of location. For searches conducted on the district network, results are further restricted by both Google SafeSearch and ContentKeeper, providing an additional layer of filtering that enforces district-specific content standards.

In short, search history reflects what a student attempted to look up, not what the student was permitted to see. The district's filtering systems are designed specifically to separate the two, ensuring that student queries remain logged for review while inappropriate content is prevented from being accessed on and off the district network.

YouTube

YouTube is active on all student devices within a strictly educational use framework. Access is governed by Google's content classification system, which permits videos identified as educational by default and restricts all other content. This configuration preserves YouTube as an instructional resource while ensuring that non-educational or inappropriate material is not accessible through district-managed devices.

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Lyon County School District enforces Strict Restricted Mode within Google Workspace for Education, applying a tighter algorithmic filter that substantially narrows the available video pool. This setting prioritizes educational and explicitly vetted content while excluding the general-interest, vlogger, and entertainment-oriented material that the Moderate tier permits. The configuration reflects the District's commitment to a safer, more instructionally focused digital environment for students.

Bark - Content Monitoring

The district also utilizes Bark for Schools, a content monitoring system that reviews student activity within Google Drive, Google Mail, and Google Chat. Any activity determined to be of high concern or inappropriate is automatically flagged and shared with school administrators through email notifications. Monitoring occurs continuously, both on and off campus, as long as the student is signed into their district Google account.

Bark is specifically designed to identify indicators of serious concern, including signs of bullying, self-harm, suicidal ideation, threats of violence, explicit content, and predatory communication. When a flag is generated, administrators receive the relevant context needed to initiate timely outreach, intervention, or family notification. This layer of monitoring complements the district's filtering systems by addressing not only what students attempt to access, but also the nature of the communications and content they produce within their district accounts.

Recommendations for Families

Google SafeSearch operates continuously on District-managed devices. It is important to acknowledge, however, that no filtering system is infallible, and no tool can be expected to intercept every possible search outcome. Certain categories of queries illustrate where the limits of automated filtering become apparent.

A direct search using explicit language will generally be filtered and blocked. A search using medical or scientific terminology that Google SafeSearch classifies as educational may, in rare cases, return results that include content a parent would consider sensitive. Similarly, when a student searches for the name of a website known to host inappropriate material, the site itself will be blocked by the District's filtering systems, but references to that site appearing in reputable news coverage may still surface through the associated article.

These examples are not exhaustive. They are intended to illustrate that while the District's search and content monitoring filters provide a strong layer of deterrence, no technological safeguard can fully replace active parental supervision at home, ongoing media literacy instruction, and the development of digital citizenship within the family unit. Parents and guardians remain the most important factor in shaping responsible digital citizenship, and consistent reinforcement of appropriate online behavior outside of school will always outperform any filter the District can deploy. Ultimately, each student is responsible for their own conduct online, and the District's filtering tools are intended to support, not replace, the personal accountability expected of every user accessing District systems. The most effective protection for students results from the combined effort of District-level filtering and consistent engagement from families.

Budget Considerations N/A

Discussed at Previous Meeting N/A

Attachment(s) N/A

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