Faronics Deep Freeze Cloud Connector and
Gilchrist County School District

CASE STUDY

About

Gilchrist County is a top 10 rated school district in the state of Florida that has been recognized throughout the state for their high expectations and proven results. With over 2,700 students attending two elementary schools and two combination middle/high schools, the district offers comprehensive programs to prepare students for future endeavors.

Receiving an "A" grade under Florida's accountability system for the past eleven years in a row, Gilchrist County Schools work hard toward fulfilling every student's potential through rigorous programs, relevant instruction, and meaningful relationships.

Problem

Operating 3,000 Windows workstations across two towns with only three team members is no easy feat. "The fact is that in these educational environments, there are often students and teachers that are not very tech savvy," described Aaron Wiley, Director of Instructional Technology at Gilchrist County School District. With having to support so many students, teachers, and administration, maintenance and update times were becoming common concerns for Aaron and his IT team. They also found it challenging to keep the computer labs at each school up-to-date due to regular updates from programs like Flash and Shockwave, and bi-weekly updates from Java.

To add to these challenges, the antivirus software that was implemented at the time was resource intensive and slowing workstations down. "Every time something went wrong on a machine, the first thing we did was turn off the antivirus because it was so hard to handle – it got very aggravating."

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Solution

Gilchrist had already been a Deep Freeze Enterprise customer for over 10 years – in fact, it was the first software package Aaron evaluated when he came on board. "Deep Freeze is invaluable as it saves so much man power," he said. As an existing customer, the Cloud Connector was the perfect addition for Gilchrist as it allows the administrator to web-enable their Enterprise consoles and manage workstations from any web browser.

"I can pull up a list of computers in a group and see their status. Are they up to date? Is there anything I need to worry about that's not being updated? Is everything included in their profile? It provides a great snap shot." Before their 30 day trial even came to an end, the IT team was already convinced that it was the solution to many of their problems. They appreciated the Cloud Connector's ease of handling, tracking at a glance, and ability to check conditions across their deployment.

Deep Freeze has been so effective across the organization that even some teachers asked to have it installed on their computers to prevent being infected by spyware downloaded by their own kids afterschool. Gilchrist's Senior Technician also applied Usage Stats to isolate computers that were not being fully utilized, so that they could be "borrowed" to increase lab capacity for testing on a temporary basis.

A feature of the Cloud Connector that Gilchrist found particularly useful was Software Updater. In addition to having the ability to update a host of popular software from a central management console, Aaron and his team were able to customize several maintenance periods for each of their schools based on the specific needs of each. They could also accommodate for special events, like Accelerated Reader nights with students and parents, and adjust all settings on the fly.

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In a particular case, the team was given less than a week to implement a progress monitoring testing interface that required the Chrome browser (at the time, Gilchrist was only utilizing Internet Explorer in their environment). "Instead of having to go to every computer - thaw, install and freeze again - we were able to push out Chrome using Software Updater. It was a life saver!" Aaron affirmed.

When Aaron began evaluating options for new antivirus software, he was excited to learn of Faronics' Anti-Virus add-on to the Cloud Connector. After realizing that their current antivirus was just not cutting it – "it wasn't that there was anything wrong with our computers, we just had the wrong software on them" – Aaron and his team were on the hunt for something that was light, but effective. Faronics Anti-Virus was the answer. Ultimately, it was easy to manage, compatible with Deep Freeze, provided security against critical threats, and did not eat up tech time and students' time in the classroom.
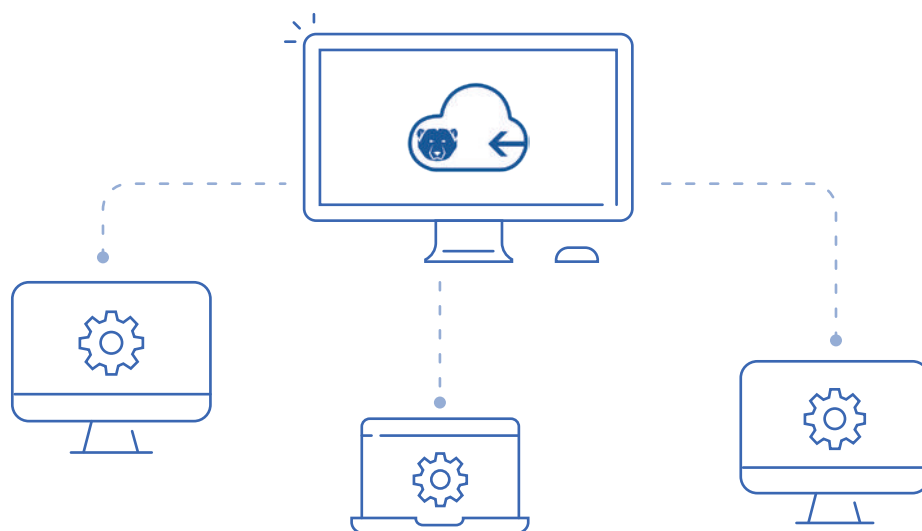
Results

Following the integration of Deep Freeze Cloud Connector into their deployment, Gilchrist found dramatic improvements in their uptime and system manageability. The tech team was able to manage all of their Enterprise consoles from one web console, while also maintaining user permissions for each team member. Software Updater allowed them to stay current on the latest updates and easily deploy newly requested software. Usage Stats provided visibility into the most utilized computers and applications and helped to make informed decision on how to best reallocate resources. In addition, the light and fast Faronics Anti-Virus kept their systems safe while saving IT time outside of school hours and student time in the classroom.

"After evaluation, I approached our administration to approve the upgrade to our Faronics software. 'Buy this for me and I won't ask you for anything else,' is all I asked. I describe the Cloud Connector as one place to rule them all. It has been vital to our environment and my team could not do without it. I have and would recommend it to everyone. At the end of the day, our investment has been very worth it and a great decision."

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