Faronics Deep Freeze & Faronics Insight

The McFarland School District

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THE MCFARLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

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The McFarland School District,

in south central Wisconsin, comprises of several schools - including an elementary school, an intermediate school, a middle school and a high school. These schools cater to approximately 2,000 students, who use the multiple lab classrooms, which form an integral part of the learning experience here.

The school district has a dedicated IT team that is responsible for the maintenance, management and troubleshooting for the computers in these labs.

Aaron Folcik, the school district's Network Administrator and his colleagues, dealt with their fair share of trial and error, in selecting the right computer management tools needed to manage these labs as well as the school district's overall IT operations effectively.

The IT team also plays a central role in empowering the educators with useful classroom management and collaboration tools needed to ensure an engaged learning environment while keeping students on task.

Since 2006, Faronics' software products have played a consistent role in simplifying McFarland School District's IT operations, by helping them handle these operational challenges.

Here's the school district's story on how they were introduced to Deep Freeze and Faronics Insight:

REIMAGING RE-IMAGINED
WITH FARONICS DEEP FREEZE

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THE CHALLENGE

Mr Folcik had joined as the district's new network administrator, in the summer of 2006. One of his first projects was to re-image every computer in the district, with a small team of technicians.

During the school year, these computers would take a beating from staff, faculty and students. Despite the best efforts of the IT team, backdoor Trojans, viruses, malware and other cyberthreats always found a way to sneak onto the systems, and lurk surreptitiously in the background. To the best of the team's knowledge, the most effective way to vanquish these and other forms of configuration drift was to manually re-image hundreds of computers.

THE SOLUTION

One of the district's technicians who had earlier used Faronics Deep Freeze successfully, suggested they use it to maintain the computers' configuration. Mr Folcik recalled "He brought it up by saying, we don't necessarily want to have to re-image everything, but we need to keep things clean."

That's exactly what they did. Rather than re-imaging computers once or twice every year, Deep Freeze allowed them to keep system configurations in a perpetually "Frozen" state.

This ensured that they would accumulate fewer files on the computers, and that any viruses or malware lurking on the system would be eradicated upon each reboot. Predetermined "ThawSpaces" would also allow teachers to save critical files on their computers.

This reboot to restore functionality ultimately gave Folcik and his team the best of both worlds: clean computers without time-consuming, rigorous re-imaging.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT MADE EASY WITH FARONICS INSIGHT

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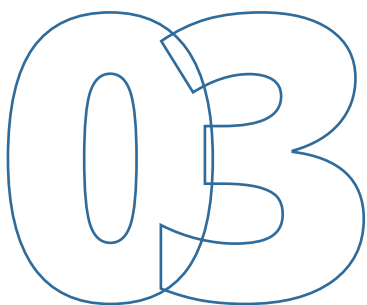
THE CHALLENGE

The teachers were looking for a better way to restrict access to certain websites, as well as the ability to control multiple student computers at the same time. The IT team began looking for classroom management solutions that could help with such situations.

The initial solutions they deployed didn't work properly. For instance, Folcik noted that 3-4 computers wouldn't connect to the software, or computers would lock up inadvertently. While he needed a classroom management collaboration tool that empowered teachers, at the end of the day, the software had to work.

THE SOLUTION

Faronics INSIGHT™

With Faronics Insight, teachers were able to get a classroom view of the entire computer lab, in which icons were arranged to represent each computer.

"We had already tried different lab control programs, and we had already been using Deep Freeze, so we were already familiar with Faronics," Folcik said.

"We decided to install a demo of Faronics Insight in one lab, and everything just worked! We had a couple teachers try it and they loved it too."

- Aaron Folcik,
   Network Administrator,
   McFarland School District

"So if teachers are looking at a certain computer on the teacher console, in their mind, they'll know what student that is. If one of them is off task, you can quickly see which one of those 25 or more screens is showing something different." said Mr Folcik.

From here, teachers have the ability to:

Directly and silently instant message students.

Lockdown screens form a single console.

Polling and quiz options.

Restarting the computers so Deep Freeze can clean them up.

The IT team also benefited from the freedom to control multiple computers at the same time, as well as the organization provided by the Insight channel system that segregated each classroom into independent channels. When the time came to add new software or updates that were not scripted for automatic installs, Folcik simply hopped onto a teacher console and controlled all computers in that lab simultaneously. He could run installation packages on up to 30 or more computers at the same time.

"It's kind of a neat thing sitting in the back of a lab and seeing that you're controlling all 30 of those computers at the same time, like a puppet master!"

- Aaron Folcik,
  Network Administrator,
  McFarland School District

A BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP

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Today, the McFarland School District uses Faronics Deep Freeze on every computer for grades three and up. Meanwhile, Faronics Insight is used primarily in all five of the high school computer labs. It is currently installed on all their Windows computers. The key advantage of both systems is the combination of streamlined computer maintenance and easier-than-ever classroom management and collaboration for teachers.

Folcik also identified a final ancillary benefit of Deep Freeze and Insight - the speedy customer service the McFarland School District received over the decade or so that they have been partnered with Faronics.

> "Faronics has always had great support, and it's always had good pricing bundles district-wide. I always felt like I was an important customer even though we are a small district."
>
> - Aaron Folcik,
>   Network Administrator,
>   McFarland School District

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