

## Monitoring Software Helps Keep Good Kids Good



New Castle Community Schools

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**Industry:** Education  
**Location:** New Castle, Indiana  
**Students/Teachers:** ≈ 4000

The New Castle Community Schools network is wireless, with tablet PCs, PDAs, and more than 1,400 workstations on a wide area network spanning 11 buildings and supporting nearly 4,000 students.

The network is driven by more than 20 Windows 2003 Servers and all PCs use the Windows XP operating system.

For more information about the New Castle Community Schools, please visit: [nccsc.k12.in.us](http://nccsc.k12.in.us).

*Three unsettling events challenged New Castle Community Schools: a keylogger found on a library PC, a threatening note created on a school printer, and an uncomplimentary anonymous web email sent to the school principal.*

### The Challenge

Director of Information Services Larry Koby said that in recent times the school's network began to fall prey to serious incidents. In retrospect, Koby saw the events as three strikes ... and it was time to take action.

"Strike one was finding a keystroke logger on a library PC," said Koby. "It was a simple program, something someone downloaded off the Internet. It was capturing passwords ... very frightening for us.

"Strike two was the appearance of a threatening note taped to a mirror in a restroom."

Koby explained the New Castle Community Schools administration – perhaps no differently than any public school across the nation – vividly remembers April 1999 when two Columbine High School seniors went on a shooting spree, killing 13 classmates.

"The note we found was composed on a PC and printed out," said Koby. "Again, VERY FRIGHTENING."

And strike three? An uncomplimentary anonymous web email sent to the assistant principal from a PC within the school system network.

"As sophisticated as we thought we were – paying attention to viruses and filtering Internet content – we had no idea what was going on within our own walls," said Koby. "I thought we had a secure network with tremendous kids. Not that we don't ... just not what we thought."

Because of the spurious activity, Koby recognized he was under a microscope.

"All eyes are now staring at me," said Koby. "It became pretty clear ... any school that thinks it doesn't have a problem is fooling itself."

### Search for a Solution

On the few occasions PC monitoring had been attempted, it was undertaken using remote access software designed for other purposes.

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“For a number of years we used VNC (Virtual Network Computing) over the network, mostly for tech support or training,” said Koby. “Occasionally we used it for monitoring, but it was not secure, and it also showed up in the computer user’s system tray ... if we were using it, the students knew.”

A more substantive monitoring solution, a keystroke logger, was proposed by one of the school system’s technology vendors.

“We were told the keystroke logger would tell us everything we needed to know,” said Koby. “But I was not so sure ... I dragged my feet on it ... still not ready to commit.”

Koby’s reticence turned out to be a good thing.

“At this time I’m still being looked at ... the eyes are still staring,” said Koby. “I decided to take some action so I did a search on the Internet and came across SpectorSoft.”

After reviewing the features and benefits of Spector 360 and recognizing that the PC activity and monitoring software is based on industry gold standard Spector Pro, Koby contacted one of SpectorSoft’s sales professionals.

“I obtained and installed a fully functional evaluation copy,” said Koby. “Spector 360 is such an eye-opener, the decision was so simple. It became a no-brainer ... clearly Spector 360 was the software to use.

“In comparison, the keystroke logger that had been proposed to us required having to send a person onsite to install and configure. With Spector 360, I found I could do it myself. Things went pretty quickly after that. In May we did the evaluation, we purchased the software in June, and we deployed it in July. In August, the students returned and we truly realized how little we knew about what was going on.”

## Discoveries

After installation, one of the first Spector 360 niceties Koby implemented was keyword alerts.

“The keyword alert feature is really wonderful,” said Koby. “Alerts can be sent to whomever you want, which is perfect in a school environment. With Spector 360, you can tailor your alert list ... they’re not all going to one person.”

Generating the keyword list was relatively easy ... Koby simply replicated the inappropriate words blocked by the school’s Internet content filter.

“First we put the keyword list on the library PCs,” said Koby. “We figured we might get an alert on a few of them. But the very first day ... the first hour ... we had 10 alerts. And there are only 31 PCs in the library, so 1/3 of the PCs sent alerts the first day.

“These were Word documents with inappropriate language ... clearly not research or assignments ... personal notes that students were typing, printing out, and passing. It was another eye-opener because Spector 360 takes screen snapshots so you can see the context of the word, not just that the word was used.

“And because Spector 360 provides who, what, when, and where, we were able to go to the Assistant Principal, who started calling students into the office.”

The word spread like wildfire, prompting students to engage in some aggressive behavior before they reluctantly accepted reality.

"It made me think of one of the scenes from the movie Jurassic Park," said Koby. "One of the dinosaurs went around testing the electric fence, seeing if it was hot.

"The students tried inappropriate activities ALL OVER, checking the system. They found it hot EVERYWHERE. Now, alerts are down substantially."

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In addition to the "bad word list", Koby said Spector 360 gave the school system the power to look for other types of activities.

"The combination of Spector 360 and content filtering is powerful," said Koby. "We looked for hacking software, peer-to-peer downloads, all of it. We found so many attempts to get around Spector 360. They look for ways to bypass it. They're unsuccessful, but the attempts are there."

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The first issue of the High School newspaper made Spector 360's power and presence quite apparent.

"The front page of the paper was all about how the students came back to school and THEY COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ANYMORE," said Koby.

In the newspaper article, students were quoted as saying things like:

- » "It used to be if class was boring, we could at least play solitaire."
- » "I can't download music files anymore."
- » "I can't change wallpaper."

Koby added: "We knew we were successful when the students complained."

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"Students were using an 'anti-proxy' program, bypassing the content filter by bouncing off another server," said Koby. "With Spector 360, now we can monitor even that."

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Of great importance to New Castle Community Schools is Spector 360's ability to help the system comply with the tenets of CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act).

Under CIPA, which was signed into law in December 2001, no school or its library may receive discounts on Internet technology products unless it certifies it is enforcing an Internet Safety Policy by including the use of filtering or blocking technology. CIPA decrees this Internet Safety Policy must protect against access, through computers with Internet connections, to visual depictions that are obscene, harmful to minors, or contain child pornography.

"We always felt we were in good shape with CIPA as far as compliance," said Koby. "But again, if you think kids are obeying the rules, you need an eye-opener like Spector 360."

Thanks in large part to Spector 360, New Castle Community Schools receives its discount.

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## Working with Students

Spector 360's screen snapshots are used to document infractions, and hard copies of the events are provided to teachers to assist them in the disciplinary process.

"Discipline can mean restrictions to file and print sharing only," said Koby. "Inappropriate searching can mean no Internet access, perhaps for 30 days."

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Koby said monitoring duties are made easy by the use of Spector 360's Dashboard feature.

"I can't monitor 1,400 PCS," said Koby. "So we set up four Dashboards ... it's efficient for us. The persons in charge are able to view the PCs they are in charge of and no others. They get the alerts, they do the viewing, and they take the appropriate action. That's where the responsibility belongs ... the person in charge is the person in charge."

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All computers with the potential to be used by students are monitored.

"It is in our Acceptable Use Policy that we will monitor," said Koby. "The policy must be signed every year."

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With the advent of Spector 360, the school modified its Acceptable Use Policy to add commentary about student and faculty responsibility in the face of inappropriate behavior by others.

"Students and faculty are responsible for reporting ANY attempts to circumvent monitoring," said Koby. "You can't turn a blind eye. Consequences are just as severe if you know and don't report it."

## Spector 360: The Software of Choice

"Probably the biggest benefit I've received from the use of Spector 360 is that I no longer feel the eyes are on me," said Koby.

In fact, thanks to his research, development, and implementation of Spector 360 in the school system, Koby received special recognition.

"The Superintendent of Schools sent an email complimenting me," said Koby.

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Koby said he was pleasantly surprised by Spector 360's features, ease of installation, and minimal impact on network resources.

"When we looked at the evaluation copy, we talked about what it would take to pull it off," said Koby. "I wondered how a single server could handle all the activity. At first, I was skeptical. You'd think I was from Missouri the way I was questioning it."

Because of his cautious stance, Koby said he bought more robust hardware than the published Spector 360 requirements suggested.

"Then I saw how well the server was keeping up ... EXACTLY LIKE IT'S ADVERTISED," said Koby. "Spector 360 didn't take up a tremendous amount of hard drive space ... the CPU load was low ... the RAM load was low. Because I bought more than I needed, I'm pretty well set for the future."

*“The screen snapshots are undisputed. They give us the ability to go back in time, so just because the bell rang, you didn’t get away with it.*

*Spector 360 has definitely restored order. Activities that are supposed to be occurring ARE occurring.”*

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Despite the size and complexity of the New Castle Community Schools network, Koby said the Spector 360 install also went as advertised.

“During the summer, when we revamped the whole network, my staff looked at me and wondered,” said Koby. “With 1,400 computers, they questioned how we were going to pull it off. They were envisioning one more thing to install.

“I described the Discovery and Silent Install, and it performed without a glitch. It’s very painless. If you want to add a PC ... a loaner, or a temp ... you can remotely do a silent install.

“I also love the updates feature, and again, IT WORKS AS DESCRIBED. I periodically check the Spector 360 website to make sure our versions match. They do, and I’m tickled.”

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Koby said he has already described to others his positive experience with Spector 360.

“I had an individual from a school in another state call to ask me if he could use one of the PowerPoint programs we have up on the school website,” said Koby. “We were chatting and eventually got on the subject of monitoring. I mentioned Spector 360 and suggested he call SpectorSoft to get his own evaluation copy.”

Koby, who makes the final decision about IT purchases, is convinced Spector 360 is the software of choice.

“If I had to do it over, I’d do it in a heartbeat,” said Koby. “It’s an investment and I definitely see the dividends. I’ve told others: you’ll get a great return on investment ... you’ll say it’s a great buy.”

“I felt we were protected from the outside, but were we protected from ourselves?” said Koby. “Spector 360 showed us we needed to do more.”

“Spector 360 has definitely restored order,” said Koby. “Activities that are supposed to be occurring ARE occurring.”

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Koby especially likes Spector 360’s screen snapshots feature.

“The screen snapshots are undisputed,” said Koby. “They give us the ability to go back in time, so just because the bell rang, you didn’t get away with it.”

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Koby likened Spector 360’s influence to driving an automobile and paying attention to speed limits.

“It’s human nature ... you obey the speed limit because you don’t want to get a ticket,” said Koby. “The law keeps the honest people honest. We have good kids here, and the good is coming out.

“It’s a lot easier to fight off temptation when you know there are consequences. Spector 360 is like radar, or an unmarked car. It keeps the good kids good.”

