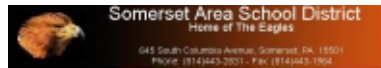


“Juniper had the perfect solution for me. I had no previous background on how to set up the appliance, but I had it working in less than an hour. Juniper works perfectly with everything our staff needs and I didn't have to hire someone to manage it.”

**Julio Velasquez**

Somerset Area School District  
Director of IT

## Somerset Area School District: A Lesson in Progress



**Customer:**

Somerset Area School District, a 2,800-student K-12 school district in Pennsylvania

**Industry:**

Education

**Challenge:**

Installing a security infrastructure that is easy to use and scalable

**Solution:**

Juniper Networks NetScreen SSL VPN solution

**Benefits:**

- Increased network scalability and security
- Expanded secure network access

The Somerset Area School District is a suburban school district located southeast of Pittsburgh. At the conclusion of the 2001-2002 school year, the Somerset Area School District had virtually no computers allocated for student use. Not surprisingly, computers were not being utilized in the classrooms to assist in learning. In fact, teachers were so accustomed to the systems on campus breaking down that almost no one bothered to use them. This created an environment in which technology was distrusted to the extreme.

In the summer of 2002, the school board understood that the district had to overcome technology issues and hired Julio Velasquez, director of IT, to connect the district to the digital world.

“After coming from the corporate world, it was astonishing how far behind Somerset had fallen,” said Velasquez. “The project was essentially like starting from scratch. We needed to totally rewire the schools. They were about 12 years behind which is more than a lifetime in the technology industry.”

Velasquez received the school board’s full endorsement to network and bring full service computer functionality to the six schools in the District, which includes 2,800

students, 180 teachers, 70 school office and support personnel and eight school administrators. Velasquez had only three months to complete the task, with rollout targeted for the new school year in the fall of 2002.

“In three months, the school was completely re-wired,” said Velasquez. “Essentially, we went from zero to 100 percent online. We got very little sleep, but it all worked by the time the doors opened on the first day of school that Fall.”

Once all of the teachers and students got accustomed to using computers and the Internet for more and more tasks, Velasquez found them requesting even greater access to their systems. Teachers wanted to be able to access their materials from home so that they could grade papers, record grades and create lesson plans online without having to duplicate the work when they got into school the next day.

Velasquez knew he needed to do something to securely connect this newly excited computer user population. He wanted to get a quality, cost-effective solution up and running fast, so he decided to explore a solution he had read about – the Juniper Networks NetScreen Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) VPN solution.



**The Solution**

The NetScreen SSL VPN solution turned out to be exactly what he needed: cost-effective, secure, easy to use and rapidly deployable. Somerset Area School District deployed a Juniper Networks NetScreen-SA 3000 SSL VPN appliance.

The NetScreen SSL VPN is a hardened network appliance that delivers secure access to networked applications and information over the Internet via any Web browser without requiring client device software downloads or installation, changes to the internal LAN servers or constant maintenance.

The SSL VPN dynamically transforms the networked content that teachers and administrators need over a secure Internet connection to a Web-based extranet interface. On the back-end LAN side, the SSL VPN's native protocol connectors (HTTP, HTTPS, PoPS and SMTP) attached to the Somerset application servers seamlessly with no configuration, Velasquez said.

**The Benefits**

The Juniper SSL VPN has been so successful with teachers at Somerset that Velasquez began expanding its use to parents and students.

“Juniper had the perfect solution for me,” said Velasquez. “I had no previous background on how to set up the appliance, but I had it working in less than an hour. Juniper works perfectly with everything our staff needs and I didn't have to hire someone to manage it.”

In addition to teacher administrator access, with Juniper's SSL VPN's ease-of-use, Velasquez is working to grant parents access to specific, private information for their student. He is working on creating a portal where parents can go to check on their students' homework assignments, grades and areas covered in different classes; as well as calendars of events, online schedules and District updates. He is currently building the parent and student portal, in which his team has nearly completed – in time for the 2004 - 2005 school year.

“We have the potential to jointly create a new system of accountability,” said Velasquez. “By making the information available online, while still protecting the privacy of the students, we keep them honest with their parents about grades and homework. Parents can stay more informed of their child's progress enabling them to get involved should problems arise. It should really give them a sense of empowerment in their child's education.”



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