

Game-Changing Network Security Solutions Frustrate Hackers & Keep Student Data Safe at NY Independent School

The Masters School is an independent college-preparatory boarding and day school in New York. Roughly 700 students from 30 countries attend the school in grades 5-12.

The Technology Challenge

When the Masters School was founded in 1877, its founder challenged students and faculty to work, learn, discover, and collaborate with “all their might.”

To do that, the school needed a state-of-the-art network that would enable students and faculty to work as efficiently and securely as possible, whether they are on campus or studying remotely.

“Thirty percent of our boarding students come from the Asia-Pacific region,” says Bhavin Patel, director of technology at The Masters School. “Having a strong firewall is critical to monitor and block a lot of that traffic that’s trying to get in from that part of the world.”

Make no mistake, educational institutions everywhere are prime targets for cybercriminals. Patel says, *“Schools are a bigger target than most people realize.”*

But virtually every school in the country faces the same challenges when it comes to having the financial resources to combat phishing attacks and malware.

Patel says, *“It’s hard for small organizations like ours to hire IT professionals at a salary we can afford within our IT budget.”*

That’s why Patel turned to Vandis, a trusted technology partner, the school has worked with since 2008. Patel says, *“I trust Vandis. They have knowledgeable engineers on staff, and they always respond to us in a timely manner.”*

Ryan Young, Chief Technology Officer at Vandis, has worked closely with The Masters School for years. Young says, *“The school had multiple commodity-grade internet circuits and didn’t have a way to make the best use of them. So, the school was assigning user groups to internet circuits, and if the user group ran out of bandwidth, they were out of luck.”*

There was also the issue of URL filtering and protecting students who may be tempted to search for inappropriate content online.



“It was necessary to have a professional services company like Vandis secure our network with a great solution like Fortinet.”

Bhavin Patel
Director of Technology
The Masters School

Customer: The Masters School

Industry: Education

Location: Dobbs Ferry, NY

The Solution

Vandis introduced the school to Fortinet's Next Generation Firewalls (NGFWs) as a replacement for legacy firewalls, to filter network traffic to safeguard the organization from both inside and outside threats. They also discussed the availability of Firewall as a Service (FWaaS), which would help the school fit the product more easily into its budget cycle while also receiving managed services to support the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the solution. They discussed how FortiClient could provide remote web filtering and deliver web security and content filtering, and how FortiGate could help the school maximize bandwidth across all circuits.

Patel immediately saw the benefits of FWaaS.

"I purchased the complete solution because we needed to have a professional and managed services company like Vandis to provide us with a great solution like Fortinet," he says.

Young says, *"It was a no-brainer. We deployed it and were even able to cut over their user groups on a group-by-group basis into the FortiGate and integrated it into their Network Access Control solution and their active directory, which gives them visibility they never had with their previous solution."*

Patel adds, *"Vandis also showed me how the Fortinet product could merge the unused bandwidth that we had on one circuit with another. That provided a huge cost savings for the school and an amazing resource for the users to be able to take advantage of."*

The Results

The Vandis FWaaS solution with Fortinet Firewalls has already paid significant dividends. It was able to detect a possible threat and alert the IT team that malicious actors may have been active on its Virtual Directory.

That allowed them to take steps to rebuild a new server. The results speak for themselves. Patel says, *"We now see a dramatic decrease in malicious traffic on the student VLAN."*

Young says, *"Where Fortinet stands out from the rest is they have an excellent security fabric. You're able to integrate all the elements of a network and create a truly intelligent fabric to secure and protect your environment. It's not just a firewall. It actually communicates with the other platforms."*

In addition to improving security gaps, students and faculty are enjoying the increased capacity and lightning-fast internet experience whether they're on or off campus. From a web filtering perspective, the Masters' network is airtight. According to Young, *"We are now able to essentially block students who try to get around filters and can now better protect them from potentially dangerous sites."*

As a result, the school has a scalable solution and an infrastructure that is secure and trustworthy, not only today but moving forward.

That will allow the students to continue to work with "all their might" just like they've been doing for nearly 150 years.

Business Impact:

- Improved network security & scalability
- Safer browsing environment for students
- Speed/faster internet
- Eliminated instances of internet not working
- Improved bandwidth
- Less time spent on network management

Solutions:

- Vandis FWaaS
- FortiGate

To learn more, contact Vandis:

www.vandis.com