

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the dilemma surrounding Internet filtering issues for K-12 schools in Kansas, using a qualitative case study design resulting in a phenomenological description of the developing themes, beliefs, and patterns. The analysis was bounded within a K-12 ethnographic perspective, explored and examined primarily through data collection methods that drew on multiple sources of information. The objective of the investigation was to develop an in-depth analysis of themes or issues, with the intent to establish interpretations about the collected cases. The study includes reflections and evaluations of the investigation, as well as suggestions for future research.

The investigation revealed that school districts within the sample consistently employed filtering strategies, early in their use of the Internet. These strategies were generally adopted on all student and faculty computers where access to the Internet was available, although a small percentage of districts chose not to utilize the same strategy on computers designated for administrative use.

The Internet filtering products in use came from a wide variety of vendors, paired with as wide a variety of options and solutions. Traditionally, these products were associated with a fee, which varied from vendor to vendor in price. Although these fees were a concern within a system that is non-profit, the costs associated with the solution were a second priority to the quality of the solution that was being employed.

Multiple issues encouraged districts to implement filtering initiatives, making up a large portion of the results and interpretations of the inquiry. These included, but were not limited to: guidance and security; mandates; undesirable content and materials; lack

of monitoring and supervision; issues of responsibility, morals, and ethics; and the beliefs, values, and wishes of the community. Those issues gave way to additional key concerns addressed within filtering sites on the World Wide Web, which focused on the intentions that K-12 schools have, when they adopt Internet filtering strategies.

The study concluded with options and opportunities that K-12 schools indicated within their quest to develop appropriate levels of filtering. These included the initial overarching question of simply whether or not to filter, as well as multiple other key factors that included: the requirements of personnel, time, and professional development; collaborative connections with the community; and varying levels of filtering in use.