STUDENTS CONNECT TO A NEW LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH A FORTINET VIRTUALIZED WIRELESS LAN

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– David Micallef
Head of Technology,
Bialik College

CHALLENGES

Bialik College consistently ranks among the leading schools in Victorian Certificate of Education performance, providing more than 1060 students with an outstanding Jewish and general education. Children from kindergarten to year 12 learn literacy and math skills and expand their educations with a rich, diverse choice of subjects and encouragement to develop a desire for lifelong learning. This capacity and passion for learning empowers students and helps them achieve excellence in their future educational pursuits.

Rapid proliferation of technology has made it essential for Bialik to provide its students with the best possible support as they prepare for tertiary studies. A key element of that support is use of the school’s network and the Internet. Students are encouraged to discover the benefits of online connection and practical online tools, such as email and search engines.

Students and staff increasingly used their personal computers, laptops, tablets, Apple iPads, and smartphone devices such as the iPhone and Blackberry, on campus. However, without a wireless network, access was limited to wired connections. Students and staff were not able to obtain network or Internet access consistently enough to maximize the learning experience. “We wanted all our students to have a fair go at using the school’s network with Internet access,” says David Micallef, head of technology for Bialik College. “We already have access to a number of

RESULTS

• Achieved high reliability and performance for large number of simultaneous users.
• Freed students from classroom boundaries.
• Simplified installation and management by eliminating need for channel planning.

FORTINET PRODUCTS USED

• MC4000 series controllers
• Fortinet APs
devices with the capability for wireless Internet connectivity. The only thing that was hindering our progress was the lack of a wireless network solution for the campus.”

**SOLUTION**

Bialik College explored a number of wireless LAN solutions, most of which required complex installation or time-consuming management. With the help of Wavelink Communications, Bialik chose a Fortinet wireless LAN solution.

“Bialik College needed a wireless LAN solution that was simple to implement and manage throughout the campus, without affecting classes,” says Iian Rubin, Managing Director, Wavelink Communications. “We are proud to support this highly academic school with an accountable and reliable wireless LAN solution from Fortinet that can offer students a stable Internet connection.”

The Fortinet virtualized wireless LAN provides comprehensive wireless coverage across the Bialik campus and supports any 802.11 a/b/g/n mobile device. Fortinet Virtual Cell™ technology makes the network simple to install and manage by eliminating the need for channel planning and enabling all access points to be deployed on the same channel. Each access point is deployed at full power, delivering greater coverage with fewer access points—up to 30% fewer access points may be required, which also reduces capital costs. Adding capacity for dense user environments is as simple as adding a channel, and performance for bandwidth-intensive devices is significantly improved.

In addition to delivering excellent throughput and power, Micallef also praised the network’s total scalability. If additional coverage is needed, access points can easily be added—even by school IT administrators who are not wireless experts. Bialik staff completed full deployment of the Fortinet controller and 26 access points in less than one week.

“The best thing about Fortinet wireless LAN solution was the ease of implementation,” says Micallef. “Unlike solutions from other vendors, there was no need to hire additional consultants to deploy the product, as it was all done in-house.”

**BENEFITS**

Staff and students enjoy the high reliability of the Fortinet wireless LAN solution. They use the school’s network with Internet access from anywhere on campus. There have been no connectivity interruptions or issues associated with channel interference. Staff and students now have freedom from the boundaries of classroom walls and expanded possibilities for learning. On a beautiful day, students can be found sitting on the grass, conducting research for their schoolwork with their laptops. Teachers are also happy to bring their classes to other locations around the school, because they know that no matter where they go, online access will be available.

“It is easy to see that Fortinet was the right choice for us,” says Micallef. “We are pleased that the Fortinet infrastructure can support high densities of wireless users. It gave our school an easy-to-implement, problem-free solution and the benefits definitely outweighed the costs.”