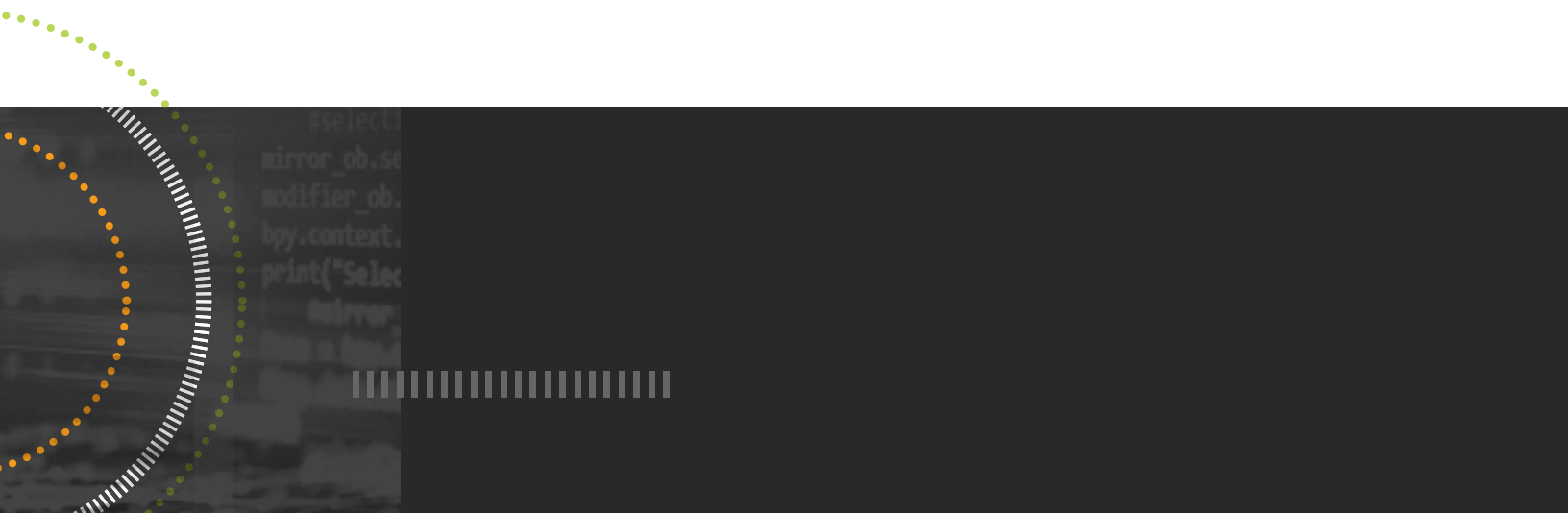WHITEPAPER

How SolarWinds Can Help With Your Distance Learning Goals

Reduce complexity, tighten security policy and process, and improve service management

How SolarWinds Can Help With Your Distance Learning Goals

We're clearly in unique times. As schools began the 2020 – 2021 school year, many students and teachers had to learn how to learn and teach remotely. One of the most important aspects of this remote learning scenario is connectivity.

At the end of the day, if the connection is slow or lost, teachers can't teach and students can't learn. It's as simple as that.

Adding to the challenge are school systems—and students—grappling with obstacles for the first time that many larger, corporate organizations have already overcome. How does an elementary school student issue a trouble ticket if she cannot access the assignment? How does a college student know if his seemingly lagging computer is due to an issue with his computer's performance or a performance issue in the university network or infrastructure?

Fortunately, schools are similar to corporate enterprise organizations in their technology makeup. School systems from K – 12 to higher education have PCs, servers, storage devices, and applications, and they must implement IT security as fervently as large corporate environments.

The priorities are similar as well: reduce complexity, tighten security policy and process, and improve service management. School systems must monitor applications and websites, understand traffic activity, and be certain their networks are operating as expected.

School systems have an additional priority: speed. Remember, if teachers can't connect, students can't learn, and vice versa. The quicker issues are resolved, the quicker students and teachers can continue to learn and teach.

Luckily, SolarWinds offers a broad range of products built to help with these priorities, including the need to resolve issues quickly and decisively.

For example, SolarWinds offers the following tools and capabilities:

- SolarWinds® Server & Application Monitor (SAM) provides in-depth application and server performance information
- SolarWinds Web Performance Monitor (WPM) is designed to find and fix internal and external website and web application performance issues
- SolarWinds Pingdom® monitors website performance as well as users' digital experiences
- SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor (NPM) provides deep insight into all aspects of the network

- SolarWinds Network Configuration Manager (NCM) helps save time and money by automating network configuration management and backup tasks

- SolarWinds Security Event Manager (SEM) provides centralized log collection and normalization as well as automated threat detection and response

- SolarWinds Web Help Desk® is an easy-to-use help desk ticketing and asset management software

- SolarWinds Service Desk is a software as a service (SaaS), cloud-based help desk and ticking solution

- SolarWinds Dameware® is a remote-control software designed to let the IT team take control of a user's system to troubleshoot problems in real time

Let's take a closer look.

PRODUCTS IN DEPTH

Server & Application Monitor (SAM)

At the end of the day, one of the most important questions any IT team member will need to answer is whether or not an application or service is up and running. This is precisely the information SAM provides, plus a lot more.

In a nutshell, SAM monitors applications and the servers and processes associated with them, allowing education IT teams to visualize application performance across the environment. In the past, the administrator would have to ping applications to detect latencies; the information provided by SAM goes much deeper, allowing the administrator to see how the applications are communicating with one another.

With SAM, the IT team can see latencies, packet loss, and even the dependencies relying on each application—such as servers and storage—to see how these pieces contribute to application performance. SAM can even monitor resources within the cloud.

SAM comes with more than 1,200 application templates and allows IT teams to quickly and easily create custom templates.

Web Performance Monitor (WPM)

If a student can't log in to the system, they won't be able to sign up for classes and learn. This is what WPM monitors and ensures—it's designed to make sure users can access applications effectively and accomplish their objectives. How do internal and external webpages load for users outside your network, and are they functioning properly? WPM tells them all this information.

WPM even provides historical information—if an application slows or stops, the team can compare the time when it was working to when it wasn't to quickly determine the root cause of the issue. WPM provides the ability to test different sites from different locations, including from within the cloud.

Pingdom

Like WPM, Pingdom monitors web performance, but Pingdom includes synthetic transactions and is available as a SaaS offering. Pingdom allows the IT team to access a highly detailed product console and perform real-time monitoring to ensure students and teachers can access the necessary sites and resources. With Pingdom, the IT team can monitor traffic from individual users at unique times, view application performance across the entire technology stack, see how end users are seeing web applications, and even create a range of dashboard views—for the technical team or the management team—providing an overview of web application performance.

Network Performance Monitor (NPM)

NPM is considered the "best practice" product for network monitoring because it helps ensure IT teams can quickly identify and resolve network performance issues. NPM monitors all network devices, from firewalls, routers, and switches down to individual ports. Increased visibility is helpful for troubleshooting issues, and alerts let you know where to troubleshoot if there are performance issues.

Want to see if your network and infrastructure are operational? NPM does that. Want to know what "normal" traffic looks like and what traffic levels well beyond normal look like? NPM does that. Want to quickly and easily find out what's causing network issues or slowing down applications? NPM does that. Finally, do you want a summary view of all this information? NPM does that, too.

Network Configuration Manager (NCM)

The primary value of NCM is its ability to automate network configuration management and backup tasks, which can save the IT team inordinate amounts of time and money. For example, NCM can tell the team if there are any non-matching configurations among devices, when the change happened, and who made the change, and it can then quickly and easily correct the misconfiguration.

NCM provides automated configuration backups, which can be helpful in restoring network operation or recovering from an outage. The solution can also determine which devices are running which configurations. NCM helps the team manage policies and compliance requirements, and—the Holy Grail for many IT admins—with NCM, the team can change a configuration in one location and have it updated across all affected devices.

Security Event Manager (SEM)

IT compliance is an underlying requirement for schools because of audit requirements and threats of ransomware and the like. An all-in-one security information and event management (SIEM) solution for log collection, alerting, analysis, and reporting, SEM is designed to help schools identify and respond to unusual events and demonstrate compliance. SEM helps with detection of unusual patterns, automated incident analysis and response, and compliance reporting.

Web Help Desk/Service Desk

Customer support and IT service delivery are crucial for the IT team to provide effective customer service, and they're also crucial to establishing trust with students and teachers regarding the IT team's ability to meet increasing demands.

This is precisely what an effective service desk can provide and what SolarWinds delivers through its Web Help Desk and Service Desk offerings.

Both solutions offer automated ticketing, a centralized knowledge base of ticketing issues—so the system can learn and solve repeated issues more quickly—and the ability to track and manage IT assets. In fact, each offering's incident management capability consolidates, manages, and prioritizes incoming tickets.

These solutions also offer ease and standardization—the service catalog standardizes the service request and fulfillment processes—and the users' service portal serves as a single place to submit tickets and requests.

Whether the organization prefers an on-premises solution or one offered as a SaaS solution, SolarWinds meets the need with both.

Dameware

The final piece of the distance learning puzzle is Dameware.

The importance of being able to remotely access a student's or teacher's computer can't be overstated. Most organizations are currently understaffed, and many staff members are working remotely. Having the ability to troubleshoot a problem in real time by "taking over" an end user's device is exactly what Dameware does.

ABOUT SOLARWINDS

SolarWinds (NYSE:SWI) is a leading provider of powerful and affordable IT infrastructure management software. Our products give organizations worldwide, regardless of type, size, or IT infrastructure complexity, the power to monitor and manage the performance of their IT environments, whether on-prem, in the cloud, or in hybrid models. We continuously engage with all types of technology professionals—IT operations professionals, DevOps professionals, and managed service providers (MSPs)—to understand the challenges they face maintaining high-performing and highly available IT infrastructures. The insights we gain from engaging with them, in places like our THWACK online community, allow us to build products that solve well-understood IT management challenges in ways that technology professionals want them solved. This focus on the user and commitment to excellence in end-to-end hybrid IT performance management has established SolarWinds as a worldwide leader in network management software and MSP solutions. Learn more today at www.solarwinds.com.

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