

From: Chris Richardson [mailto:Chris.Richardson@nfld.k12.mn.us]
Sent: Wednesday, May 11, 2011 4:11 PM
To: Nelson, Teresa
Cc: Hillmann, Matt
Subject: Re: Internet Filtering

Dear Ms. Nelson,

The following accurately reflects what I shared with the reporter from Northfield Patch:

"...But, according to Superintendent Chris Richardson, the problem has been resolved.

After being notified by Northfield students that they couldn't access LGBT resources, the ACLU sent a letter this week to the district calling for the filter to be lifted and filed a request to ask how the filters were put in place. The ALCU says Northfield uses software called Lightspeed, which contains a filter called "education.lifestyles," defined as "Education about lifestyles—gay, lesbian, alternate."

The district has several filters in place to block access to many sites, most notably pornographic websites and social media sites like Facebook, Richardson said.

He said when Lightspeed was installed in 2009, the technician must have blocked the "education.lifestyles" section, unbeknownst to district officials.

"We've had no kids questioning or complaining (about it)," Richardson said. "We weren't aware it was blocked."

Richardson said had district officials been notified, they would have fixed the issue. He said they didn't know of the issue until a statement from the ACLU-MN was released.

"LGBT youth face a lot of challenges growing up in today's society. The websites that are being filtered by Northfield are important resources for LGBT teens to go to for support and help, it is unfortunate that they would block these sites," said ACLU-MN attorney Teresa Nelson in the statement.

Richardson agreed, saying Northfield is supportive of all its students, and a simple phone call would have fixed the issue.

"It was pretty clear there was no intentional desire (there)," he said of the filter...."

Once we became aware that the sites were blocked, we immediately removed the filter on that category of sites. We have checked and determined that these sites are now unblocked.

Our attorney should be forwarding our response to your other requests for information today and you should be receiving it shortly. If you have any other questions, please feel free to call me at 507-663-0629.

Respectfully,

L. Chris Richardson, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Northfield Public Schools

>>> "Teresa Nelson" <tnelson@aclu-mn.org> 5/11/2011 3:01 PM >>>

Dear Dr. Richardson,

I am writing to follow up on the ACLU-MN's recent letter. Based on the following news story:

<http://northfield.patch.com/articles/northfield-schools-under-fire-from-aclu-for-alleged-internet-filtering-of-lgbt-content>

it appears that the Northfield School District has resolved the improper filtering issue that we brought to your attention. I wanted to thank you for taking swift action to address this issue and recognize that the improper filtering was inadvertent on the part of district officials. I would appreciate written confirmation of the information that was included in the news article.

Again, thank you for taking swift action to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

Teresa Nelson

Legal Counsel

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