

Long Branch Public Schools has assembled a network team that consists of a Network Administrator and a Systems Administrator. Between the 2 of them, a plethora of certifications have been obtained including a CCNP and MCSE. This team is not only responsible for the inner workings/ daily functionality of our network, but also the research and development for future implementations of networking equipment/services.

With well over 40 years of combined experience, the team uses best past practices along with frequent attendance at in person and virtual seminars / demonstrations for looks at new technology. Whenever the company we are working with allows us to do so, we obtain a demo of the product so we can get working/hands on knowledge of the equipment. Extensive research is done and places that have deployed the tech are either visited and/or brought into the conversation. Upon thorough investigation and evaluation of the product, a consensus is reached and a recommendation is passed onto the District Technology Director to either pursue the equipment or look for alternatives. Once a decision is reached at the Technology Team level – the information and recommendation is brought to the Operations and Management Committee which consists of administration and board members. At our quarterly meetings, we discuss large purchases and deployments. At these meetings, all of the information is relayed and an open discussion about cost, reliability, functionality and effectiveness are at the forefront. If there are questions or disagreements, the Technology Team will gather more information or begin the process again to look for a more suitable solution. Once the committee fully agrees on the final solution, the order is processed.

For FY2022 we will be replacing our 2 district firewalls and our 2 district web gateways. A perfect example of the aforementioned process is shown by the measures we took before deciding upon the equipment to purchase. A direct call to a manufacturer, which involved a representative and an engineer, allowed us to choose the proper firewalls for our environment. With their recommendation after an extensive conversation being a direct upgrade of our current equipment, it was apparent there was no need to look elsewhere as it is a proven solution without any benefit to changing the product line and/or brand. On the other hand, while we were evaluating our web gateways, we addressed a few of issues and concerns of our current product by involving multiple vendors and demoing their product and/or speaking with Technology Departments of other school districts. After extensive research and conversations, it was decided that a full hardware replacement would best suit our needs while maintaining the same manufacturer of the software but upgrading to a newer version.

As a large school district that is on par with enterprise level deployments, network design and security are of the utmost importance to us. Working as a team, thoroughly researching and experimenting with multiple products while involving as many knowledgeable voices as possible, has proven to be a recipe for success that we use for all of our decisions.