



# Classroom Management Technology

What it is, why it matters, how to procure it

Three things every district leader needs to know

A teal-tinted photograph showing a group of students sitting around a wooden desk. They are engaged in collaborative work, with some looking at papers and others at a tablet. A backpack is visible on the floor next to the desk.

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# 1.0 Introduction

## About this document

This whitepaper is intended to inform district leaders about the role classroom management plays in a school technology strategy. District personnel will learn how it works, how it benefits teachers and administrators, how to find a good vendor, and how to ensure a time and cost-efficient deployment.

**It is essential reading for:** district leaders, district technology directors, instructional technology directors and coaches, teachers, and anyone with an interest in improving learning outcomes in the digital classroom.

## About Smoothwall

Smoothwall is a leading web filtering, digital monitoring, and classroom management developer. Since 2001, Smoothwall solutions have protected millions of students worldwide.

We pioneered the development of real-time, content aware web filtering and have since launched further monitoring and digital safety solutions to protect users in today's world.

Proactive developing and improving our products based on the needs and requirements of schools is what we do best and is what makes us a leading safeguarding provider in education.

If you have any questions about classroom management, its implementation, or digital safeguarding in general, please do not hesitate to contact the Smoothwall team.

We'd be happy to help.

## What is Classroom Management

Classroom management software enables teachers to control the devices students use in class. By controlling what students see and with the ability to instantly spot when someone goes off track teachers can maintain focus and improve the learning outcomes in their dynamic, digital classrooms.

The traditional method of classroom management involved teachers walking around, physically checking whether students were on the right page or topic. As the adoption of learning technology such as Chromebooks, interactive digital textbooks, or educational online coding games, increased in classroom, a teacher's job became more challenging. Keeping track of a classroom full of students who are simultaneously online demands a different type of classroom management.

Additionally in the past few years, education has undergone a rapid transformation. Demand for increased learning outcomes against a backdrop of decreasing funding means that districts have little choice but to enable their schools to fully leverage the benefits of the digital classroom but to do so as efficiently and effectively as possible.

As the usage of classroom management software increases, so does the functionality it offers and it is not uncommon to see a whole range of additional features included by vendors such as attendance management, online student grading, email distribution, and others.

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## 2.0 Classroom Management Software in Action

Classroom management software is generally split into two parts: the administrative interface and the teacher interface. Both parts work hand in hand and are critical to the overall solution.

### Administrative Interface

Although the software can be a quick and simple technical installation, it's the overall implementation in classrooms that is critical to getting the most out of a classroom solution.

In most quality solutions, administrators will have access to an interface to configure the structure of how the software will operate. It will also consist of flexible options to build a system that fits the needs of the school. This can be something as simple as syncing to Google Classroom or Student Information System (SIS) or giving permission to certain features.

Administrators of classroom management software will first sync Google Classroom, their Student Information System (SIS), or a properly formatted spreadsheet. The administrator should then have the ability to produce policies and restrictions on teachers that may be based on subject or grade level.

The same interface will provide other custom options such as time-based restrictions that can limit the times of day teachers can activate classroom management.

### Teacher Interface

The other important part is the teacher interface. The interface teachers see and use is determined by how their administrators configure it but generally they will use the interface to manage their classrooms in two ways:

- By having an overall view of students' activity
- Open or close browser tabs on student devices
- Take snapshots of student screens for web-based reporting
- Limit device use during exams
- By having the ability to temporarily block websites that are unrelated
- Freeze a student's screen if their attention is required.

Many teachers are caught in the rift between wanting to use technology to facilitate learning while wanting to ban its use to avoid distraction. One of the most critical aspects is an easy-to-use, intuitive teacher interface to blend the use of technology with instruction.

Classroom management technology puts the teacher back in control, enabling rich and focused learning and leverage all that a 21<sup>st</sup> century digital classroom has to offer.







If teachers are better prepared to integrate classroom management technology, and have access to additional training and curricular uses of it, students are more likely to be motivated and engaged.



## 3.0 How to ensure a successful implementation

### Relevant features

Choosing a solution that gives teachers everything they want and nothing they don't is an important first step in ensuring a successful implementation.

Solutions can offer a large number of features that can be overwhelming to learn, awkward to use and can take attention away from teaching.

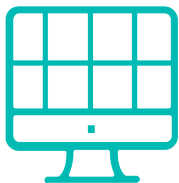
In 2018 Smoothwall conducted an extensive survey amongst teachers to identify their most preferred features. The findings are below.

### Flexible blocking

It's important to consider a flexible solution that allows a teacher to temporarily block a certain website, an entire browser, or even the whole device.

### Central visibility

Having a tool from the comfort of their computer relieves time that is usually spent on looking over student shoulders and trying to spot every deviating student.



#### A grid view of all screens

Having the ability to see all student screens is **very** important to

**51%**  
of teachers.



#### Teacher screen sharing

**55%**

of teachers **would purchase** a classroom management software if it gave them the ability to share their screen to student devices.



#### Screen lockdown

**91%**

of teachers **strongly agree** with having the ability to lock down student screens from any browsing if they fall off track.



#### Keyboard locking

**49%**

of teachers would like a classroom management software that allows them to lock student keyboards.



#### Block and allow list creation

**54%**

of teachers consider having the ability to create block and allow lists as a **top classroom management feature**.



#### Teacher support

On-site training, 24/7 support, and an online database are the **top three methods** teachers prefer to learn new technology.



Monitoring student activity is the foundation of a good classroom management software. It ensures student focus and is also a critical piece of effective digital safety implementation.



## 4.0 Choosing the right vendor

### Considerations for Administrators and Teachers

A critical element to a successful implementation is to set clear objectives and ensure any potential vendor can meet them. Before procuring classroom management software, a useful exercise is to list the objectives and requirements of both administrators and teachers. This will help shape the questions to ask a potential vendor and can take the steam out of the decision-making process and ease the path to a problem-free deployment.

Below is checklist of requirements to consider to get you started.

#### Administrator requirements

- **Google Classroom and SIS integration** – Configuring classes can be a time-consuming hassle with the wrong solution. It's important to ensure that the software being considered will seamlessly integrate into Google Classroom, SIS, or other rostering system.
- **Custom policies** – Giving teachers the freedom to control student devices in class is important but it's necessary to implement a classroom management software that can fit the needs of schools and contribute to achieving their goals.
- **Bandwidth limitations** – The solution should not take away from the school network. If the classroom management solution has complex features they should not interfere with normal network operations. (For schools with Chromebooks, this can be especially interruptive with a higher use of RAM space.)
- **Super Admin privileges** – The administrator must be able to take a hands-on approach if needed. Super Admin privileges should allow the administrator to control the entire system. For example, a Super Admin privilege might include configuring a separate time schedule for different schedules such as for a late start on a snow day; changes like this allows for consistent times throughout the system.
- **Evidence-based reporting** – Classroom management software is as much of a productivity tool as it is a learning tool.





## Teacher considerations

- **Training and support** – Training is key. When evaluating a classroom management solution, it's critical to ensure that the tool is simple enough to seamlessly blend into instruction and not take away from time teaching.
- **Intuitive interface** – Even with training and support, it can still be difficult to navigate a solution if the screen is complex. Because of this, the interface must be easy to navigate during class. A critical part of classroom management criteria must include how easy it is for non-tech savvy teachers to manage.
- **Individual student view** – It's not enough to have an overall grid view and control of student devices in the classrooms. Teachers need a tool that also allows them to take an inside look into an individual student screen as the grid view can only show one active tab. This feature is paramount to seeing if students are on task. With individual controls, teachers can also lock and assign multiple tasks to individual students.
- **Google Classroom integration** – The classroom management software implementation for teachers should be facilitated with a solution that is integrated with Google Classroom. When a familiar solution is blended into a new one, the new solution becomes much easier to understand.
- **Custom rules** – Most teachers would like to integrate only the good parts of the internet when learning. Although the software administrators will have the core capabilities, teachers should have options as to how they implement the solution in their classroom to ensure widespread and effective adoption. Teachers could implement rules that limit certain website categories, in addition to categories limited by web filters, in order to maintain student focus.
- **Student engagement** – Engaged learners are better learners, an effective classroom management solution will enhance student engagement through features such as a teacher chat or quick polls. In addition to the features that limit distractions, the solution should also attract active learning.

## 5.0 Frequently asked questions

### Why do we need a classroom management tool?

As much as the internet and technology can fuel learning, it can also impede it. Classroom Management technology not only strengthens focus in the classroom, it also promotes active learning by engaging students using the medium of their interest.

### Is classroom management software expensive?

Most classroom management solutions are sold in conjunction with another network service to simplify operation and the number of vendors a district has to keep track of.

### Will it be easy for teachers to implement?

A quality solution should be seamless within instruction time. A simple interface and essential features are critical to the solution's success. If further support is needed, it is important to ensure that the provider has a strong knowledge base of articles and videos that are readily accessible.

### How can I organize my classes?

To simplify configuration, quality classroom management solutions have integrations with SIS providers or Google Classroom. If such a system doesn't exist, .CSV format files should be uploaded.

### Will a classroom management work with BYOD?

Most solutions do support BYOD functionality although it is dependent on your school district's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

### Will classroom management constrict my bandwidth?

Not necessarily. Higher-end classroom management solutions are designed to use peer-to-peer architecture to reduce the impact on your network.

### How quickly can classroom management be deployed?

Deployment times are generally dependent on your device environment. Most solutions can be rolled out within an hour or more and can also be dependent on how your solution is configured to meet the needs of your district.

### Have a question that's not answered here?

Contact our classroom management experts.

We'll be happy to help.

Tel: 800.959.3760

Email: [inquiries@smoothwall.com](mailto:inquiries@smoothwall.com)

Web: [us.smoothwall.com/contact-us](http://us.smoothwall.com/contact-us)



## 6.0 Smoothwall Classroom Manager

Smoothwall Classroom Manager is a productivity tool for teachers. It is simple to use and designed specifically to blend seamlessly into the teacher/student/classroom environment to give teachers control and enhance learning to students.

### Core features

- **Google integration:** Easy login with Google ID. Full Google Classroom synchronization removes the need to create classes from scratch.
- **Full session control:** Allows teachers to manage session times and add or remove students without district assistance.
- **Real-time grid view:** Active student devices appear as thumbnails in a single screen for easy 'scan and see' by the teacher.
- **Evidencing:** Screen snapshots can be taken and saved locally for evidencing purposes.
- **Real-time monitoring:** Real-time monitoring gives teachers immediate visibility when a student goes off track.
- **Peer-to-peer architecture:** Low impact, innovative, peer-to-peer architecture keeps bandwidth requirements to a minimum.
- **Open tab:** Open specific URLs for every student to focus on the same content.
- **Active/inactive/close tabs:** Monitor tabs on current and background screens with the ability to remotely close tabs when necessary.
- **Regain focus with lock screens:** Locking whole or individual screens helps maintain class focus.

### Looking to the future

Smoothwall's goal is to keep our customers one step ahead in the evolving world of digital safety. That means never standing still. We're continually collaborating and engineering to provide the best solutions possible. We have some exciting new features coming in 2019 for Classroom Manager. Look below and if you have any questions please get in touch. We'd love to tell you more.

- **Focused learning:** Teachers retain full URL control on student devices. They control the number of tabs and ensure students' attention is on specific URLs, and away from anything else.
- **Teacher chat:**
  - Teacher to student:** Includes a series of quick commands a teacher can send to a student such as, 'please focus on task' or 'five minutes to finish'.
  - Student to teacher:** Includes a series of quick to use replies a student can send back to a teacher E.g. 'Done' or 'understood' or 'help'. Messages are quick, private and with no interruptions to the rest of the class.
- **Rostering:** Integrates instantly with a school's management information system where student records are held. The system knows which class is in session, when and to which students. No need to key in detail, no lockouts, no conflicts.
- **Mobile control:** Teachers can control elements of the dashboard from a mobile phone freeing them to walk around and integrate fully with their class without needing to stay tied to their computer screen. Elements include:
  - Lock button:** Immediately locks all devices.
  - Distraction alert:** Discretely alerts the teacher to a student going off track.

# Contact us

If you would to learn more about any aspect of your classroom management solution and its deployment, our specialist team is ready to help.

Please contact us.

Tel: 800.959.3769

Email: [inquiries@smoothwall.com](mailto:inquiries@smoothwall.com)

Web: [us.smoothwall.com/contact-us](https://us.smoothwall.com/contact-us)

## Not ready to renew your web filtering?

Simply send us your name, email, and renewal date and we'll contact you nearer the time to discuss your options and provide a comparative quote.

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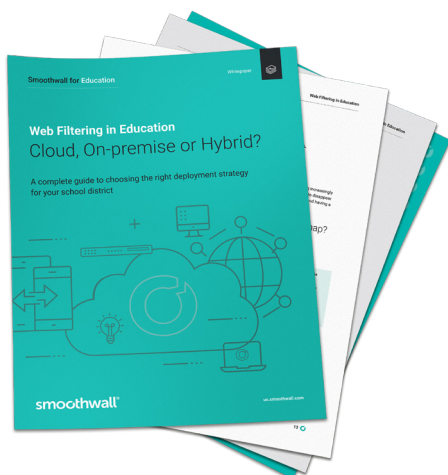
## Further reading

You may also be interested in:

### Web Filtering for Education: Cloud, On-premise, or Hybrid?

Our free guide is designed to empower district administrators with the essential knowledge needed to make informed decisions on monitoring technology for schools.

Available at <https://us.smoothwall.com/web-filtering-deployment>







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