

Elite South Florida Institution Delivers World-Class Learning with the Fortinet Security Fabric

Fortinet Case Study

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CASE STUDY

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At Gulliver Preparatory School, excellence is not optional; it's a way of life. As one of the most prestigious independent schools in the United States, Gulliver serves more than 2,200 students and nearly 600 faculty and staff across two architecturally stunning campuses in South Florida. The institution's families expect an environment that matches their investment: innovative, seamless, and technologically advanced. At Gulliver, technology drives next-level teaching and learning, enhancing how educators teach and how students learn.

That high standard extends to the school's digital infrastructure. "We're not a technology company, we're an educational institution," says Alex Rodriguez, chief technology officer at Gulliver Preparatory School. "Our mission is to provide an exceptional learning experience, not to maintain a complex network. I needed to simplify the infrastructure, so our focus could be on learning, not managing technology."

A Complex Beginning

When Rodriguez joined Gulliver in 2018, he inherited a fragmented and over-engineered network environment that was difficult to manage and expensive to maintain. Each campus operated almost independently, supported by a variety of hardware and configurations that required constant attention from a full-time network engineer and an external managed service provider. Even simple configuration changes often involved long waiting times or coordination with third parties, making the environment slow to adapt to new academic needs.

"The challenge wasn't networking, it was complexity," Rodriguez recalls. "The system we had in place required specialized knowledge to manage. It limited our ability to move fast and deliver on the expectations of our students and faculty." Recognizing that the existing infrastructure could not sustain the pace of digital transformation required in education, Rodriguez began looking for a more unified, intuitive solution that could integrate networking and security under a single management platform.

The Move to Fortinet

Rodriguez had already seen the benefits of Fortinet's approach in a previous role, where he had helped modernize and secure a large-scale enterprise network. "When I arrived at Gulliver and saw the aging infrastructure and fragmented systems, I knew exactly where I wanted to go," he says. "Fortinet had already proven itself in a demanding environment. It just made sense to bring that same efficiency and security to education."



GulliverPrep

"We're not a technology shop. Our business is education, providing an exceptional experience for our students, staff, and families. Fortinet helped us simplify the infrastructure so we could focus on that mission."

Alex Rodriguez
Chief Technology Officer
Gulliver Preparatory School

Details

Customer: Gulliver Preparatory School

Industry: Education

Location: South Florida

Business Impact

- Simplified operations eliminated the need for a full-time network engineer
- 80% of network operations handled in-house
- Zero breaches in seven years
- Reduced licensing and operational costs
- Improved network reliability and student safety

The transition began with replacing the school's legacy firewalls with FortiGate Next-Generation Firewalls (NGFWs) at both campuses. This first step set the foundation for a complete transformation that would extend across the entire environment. Over time, the school decided to build on its Fortinet footprint. "It wasn't accidental," Rodriguez explains. "I had one shot to get the investment approved, so I said, 'If we're doing this, we're going all in with Fortinet.' We wanted one vendor, one interface, one way to manage the entire environment."

Simplifying Operations and Scaling for Growth

Today, Gulliver operates as a fully integrated Fortinet Security Fabric, connecting its two campuses. The FortiGates are deployed in high-availability clusters that anchor the network edge and route all inter-campus traffic, while FortiSwitches and FortiAPs deliver seamless connectivity for faculty and students. The school supports more than 2,800 devices, including managed computers for teachers and staff, school-issued MacBooks for middle school students, and student-owned laptops for upper grades.

Network segmentation is enforced through VLANs and application-layer controls, which separate traffic for students, staff, and administrative users. Gulliver uses FortiGuard AI-Powered Security Services for application security and web filtering, ensuring that students can access the resources they need for learning while preventing exposure to inappropriate or risky content. "With Fortinet, we can lock down what students can and can't access while still maintaining flexibility," Rodriguez says. "We don't need advanced scripting or complex policies; it's intuitive and just works."

The school's IT operations have been transformed. Gulliver no longer requires a dedicated network engineer, as most configuration and management tasks are handled directly by Rodriguez and his infrastructure manager. "Eighty percent of what used to require an engineer, we now do ourselves," he says. "If something needs to change, I don't have to wait days; I can make the update in 30 seconds."

This operational simplicity has led to six-figure annual savings and freed up resources for strategic initiatives. By consolidating management under the Fortinet platform, Gulliver eliminated the need for multiple licensing contracts and reduced the overhead associated with maintaining a complex, multi-vendor environment. "The savings were significant," Rodriguez adds. "It's not just about spending less—it's about being able to move faster."

Security and Visibility without Compromise

Fortinet's integrated security architecture has given Gulliver both visibility and peace of mind. The addition of managed FortiEDR on the student and staff devices provided continuous detection, response, and 24x7 monitoring, and FortiEDR delivers advanced endpoint protection with real time detection and automated response to meet the requirements of the school's cybersecurity insurance provider.

Only a small number of users, primarily in the finance department, connect remotely through VPN sessions secured by FortiClient, which serves as a unified endpoint agent, and mobile two-factor authentication. Meanwhile, FortiAnalyzer provides detailed visibility into the school's bring-your-own-device environment, acting as the centralized analytics and log management platform that enables the IT team to identify issues and mitigate potential risks before they affect performance. "Without FortiAnalyzer, we'd be flying blind," Rodriguez says. "Now we can see what's happening on those networks, identify problem endpoints, and resolve issues before they disrupt class."

Solutions

- Network Firewall
- Secure LAN
- Unified Endpoint and Network Detection
- SOC Platform

Products

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- FortiAP
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiManager
- FortiAuthenticator
- FortiEDR
- FortiGuard AI-Powered Security Services

"In the seven years I've been here, we haven't had a single breach. That level of protection speaks for itself."

Alex Rodriguez
Chief Technology Officer
Gulliver Preparatory School



Even as the school expanded its device footprint by introducing hundreds of new laptops in its middle school program, the Fortinet network absorbed the increase without a single performance issue or interruption to instruction. The deployment of FortiAPs ensured the bandwidth and reliability needed for dense classroom environments, allowing students and teachers to focus on learning rather than connectivity.

A True Partnership

Rodriguez emphasizes that Fortinet's relationship with Gulliver goes beyond that of a technology provider. "It's been a partnership from the start," he says. "They've been with us through every expansion, every construction project, and every new challenge."

The partnership continues to grow as Gulliver embarks on its next phase of campus expansion. The school is preparing to build two new flagship facilities, a large science and dining center, and an arts and innovation complex, both of which will be designed around Fortinet infrastructure from the start.

Rodriguez is also exploring new ways to leverage FortiAnalyzer for deeper insights into network and user behavior, and evaluating Fortinet's expanding zero-trust solutions to enhance identity-driven security. "We're always looking for ways to make the environment more secure," he says. "Fortinet keeps innovating, and that keeps us ahead."

Raising the Bar for Education Technology

For Rodriguez, the greatest impact of Fortinet's solutions has been empowerment. By simplifying infrastructure, consolidating management, and embedding security throughout the network, Fortinet has allowed a small IT team to deliver enterprise-grade performance in an academic setting. "Fortinet gave us a single pane of glass and the ability to manage everything ourselves," Rodriguez says. "That's priceless for a school like ours, where excellence is the expectation."

"Since moving to Fortinet, we've been able to manage nearly all of our network operations in-house. What used to require a full-time network engineer now takes us minutes."

Alex Rodriguez
Chief Technology Officer
Gulliver Preparatory School