



# Whiteriver Unified School District Combats a Ransomware Attack and Avoids over \$60,000 in Damage



Customer  
Whiteriver Unified School District

Industry  
Education

Website  
[www.wusd.k12.az.us](http://www.wusd.k12.az.us)

Netwrix Auditor Applications  
Netwrix Auditor for Active Directory, Windows Server, Windows File Servers, Exchange

Customer Profile  
Whiteriver Unified School District (WUSD), located in the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona, U.S., comprises three elementary, one high and one general school. The district focuses on improving the academic achievement of the entire student body, which is predominantly Native American. While adhering to Arizona State Standards and transitioning to the Arizona Common Core Standards, teachers in the school district help students to better know their cultural history and cherish the traditions of the Apache.

## THE CHALLENGE

The security of information assets has been a growing concern for WUSD. Because its infrastructure is distributed across five schools, there are almost 3,000 users, and there is a high turnover rate for both employees and students, visibility into what is going on was crucial. To mitigate data security risks, the IT team of four needed to gain centralized control over the complex IT environment. Lack of visibility into insider activity could bring a slew of issues, from data exfiltration and large fines for non-compliance with Arizona state regulations to being shut down under the federal level ordinance.

## NETWRIX SOLUTION

Pierre Dehombreux, IT director at WUSD, was initially looking for ways to automate file share monitoring. "I found Netwrix Auditor to be a very handy tool because its reports give a better view and understanding of file shares; you can easily identify potential threats, misuse and misconfigurations," he explained. But he also set up the application for Active Directory, and that became even more valuable than he expected. Just half a year after deploying Netwrix Auditor, the IT team achieved the following results:

**Limited the damage ransomware can inflict.** Reviewing an activity summary across file shares Pierre detected a surge in failed access attempts and witnessed file encryption in process by ransomware. He used the Interactive Search to quickly find the user account being used, and then disabled it. Pierre credits Netwrix Auditor with saving vital files that the district needed to prepare an expense report for an organization that finances the school's vocational program, "Without Netwrix Auditor, we would have had to pay back all the money given for this program — around \$60,000 — plus pay a large fine from the Arizona Auditor General on top of it," he said.

**Increased control over rogue employees.** When several curriculum files were removed, Pierre ran a report on recently deleted items and found that the accounts belonged to two fired employees. "We brought this information to HR and showed them what can happen if they do not notify me and the helpdesk about departing employees in time. It is awesome that now it is easier for us to deal not only with IT processes, but with employee violations as well," Pierre noted.

**Continuous compliance.** WUSD has to pass an annual external audit and is subject to non-regular audits by the Arizona Auditor General, which last from 2–3 weeks to several years. Detailed reports on activity across Active Directory, Windows Server and file shares, as well as alerts on critical changes enable the IT team to streamline compliance. Pierre added, "Without the software, we would have to spend a week instead of three days generating all the reports, especially on AD activity. It has always been the main nightmare."

## KEY BENEFITS

- Mitigated damage from ransomware attack
- Minimized risk of insider misuse
- Streamlined compliance

[Learn more about Netwrix Auditor](#)

*Our environment is very dynamic and all the changes in the systems may become confusing. Netwrix Auditor brings order to the confusion. It helps us to uncover internal policy violations and workflow disruptions. You can easily figure out what changes are taking place and get alerts on the most critical one. The product has also been very helpful in detecting accounts infected by viruses, especially ransomware. I can foresee that with the software I will spend 50% less time on audit preparations as well. Netwrix Auditor is extremely useful in many ways.*

**Pierre Dehombreux,**  
**IT Director,**  
**Whiteriver Unified School District**