

St. Mary's School uses Zentyal to manage easily all their network infrastructure



"Since we are a small school with no IT Department, we needed a server system that is easy to use, reliable and affordable. Zentyal user interface is eye appealing and easy to understand. Online instructions and help made the installation a breeze for us."

Nathan Wieck
IT Administrator
St. Mary's School

While searching for an easy to use and reliable server solution that could be managed without dedicated IT staff, St. Mary's School found out that Zentyal offered everything they needed from directory and domain server to infrastructure server, gateway and much more.

The challenge

St. Mary's School is a K-8th grade school with about 180 students, 11 teachers and 5 supporting staff members. They strive to help students in the STEM fields of study and need an infrastructure that will adapt and grow with their needs with minimal administrative assistance.

As a small non-profit school with no IT Department, St. Mary's School needed a server system that is easy to use, reliable and affordable. Due to the fact they have only a volunteer IT Administrator, the system needed to be easy to maintain and update. It also had to be able to handle the growing wireless network for the "Bring Your Own Device" program for students.

Another challenge they were facing with their Microsoft Server 2010-based solution was that the school building is old and frequent power outages caused the server not rebooting or losing data at the power outages. This would lead to multiple issues having to be solved over phone or having to wait the volunteer IT personnel to come in and fix the issue.

The solution

After extensive research and testing, St. Mary's School decided to go with Zentyal. They deployed Zentyal on a Dell R710 server with 16GB memory, one 500GB HD and three 140GB HDs - The server also has three NICs, allowing them to segment the facility which helps troubleshoot any issues. Installation and initial setup was easy, taking about two hours by a volunteer IT Administrator, with little server installation experience.

Zentyal Server was configured as an office server to manage users, computers, file sharing, web server,

printers and backup. It was also configured as an infrastructure server for DHCP/DNS, NTP, Network and VPN and gateway to manage firewall, traffic shaping, bandwidth monitoring, HTTP Proxy and RADIUS. Thanks to the easy-to-understand user interface and the online instructions and help, they found the configuration of the system was very quick and easy.

Among all the enabled features, file sharing, printers management, web services and VPN access were highlighted. File sharing was a must for both teachers and students: students must be able to save work and easily share it to the teachers and teachers need to share materials, such as educational plans, with fellow teachers. Once the CUPS was set up, the print sharing was easily added to any computer on the network, Web service allows St. Mary's School to have an internal website and VPN allows the volunteer IT personnel to easily access the system remotely when needed.

The experience

St. Mary's School has been using Zentyal for four years now and they have had minimal disruptions. Usually the only need for a reboot is a power glitch: normally they run over 100 days between reboots and 90% of the time it is due to an incoming power issue. With the previous system IT volunteer was used to be called almost on a weekly basis, but since going to Zentyal there are rarely any calls for assistance. Also the fact that the system updates the critical processes when needed is a plus for them.

As the Zentyal GUI is easy to navigate, the office staff is able to add computers and users with ease. Resetting passwords or disabling users is easy as well - Thanks to the Users and Computers module, this is an easy process that takes just a few clicks of the mouse.

Previously accidental deletion of files by teachers was an issue. Being able to restore deleted files from the trash bin folder inside the teacher's folder has been a great advantage and if this doesn't work, then using the restore from the incremental backup has worked with ease.



About St. Mary's School

Originally founded as St. Joseph Academy in 1877 by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, St. Mary's School has a long-standing tradition in the Grayson County community. For over seventy five years, the school existed as both an elementary and secondary school. During the last forty years, or so, the school has offered primary education for its students. In 1972, a kindergarten was added, and in 1988, a preschool. After one hundred fourteen years of dedicated service and love for their students, the Sisters of St. Mary retired from active teaching. The fall of 1991 brought forth a new era of an all lay faculty, each dedicated to continuing the excellence of education instilled by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur.

About Zentyal

Zentyal designs and develops the Zentyal Linux Small Business Server since 2004. Zentyal Server incorporates all the network services required in a small and medium business environment, most importantly the first-ever native Microsoft Active Directory® implementation on Linux that is easy to use.

With Zentyal Server there is no need to use command line, but system administrators can manage all the network services via graphical user interface. Zentyal-based solutions allow SMBs to reduce and rationalize IT investments, improve the security and minimize system downtime.

