



BLOOMINGTON 87

School District Uses Gaggle to Support its 1:1 Initiative and Protect its Students.

About Bloomington 87

Located in central Illinois, equidistant between St. Louis and Chicago, Bloomington 87 has a technology rich curriculum providing individual devices to each of their 5,500 students.



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Challenge

With a new 1:1 initiative underway, School District 87 needed to gain better visibility over its students' email and online schoolwork activities in order to prevent bullying, fighting, suicide, and self-harm.

Solution

In search of a trusted provider to work with, the district adopted the Gaggle student safety service across its 10 schools and 5,500 students.

Results

Over the past several years, Gaggle has helped the district successfully intervene in at least six potential suicides while also keeping administrators informed about potential student fights, bullying, and other problems both on and off campus.

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We live in a world where suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death for 10- to 24-year-olds, and where approximately 5,550 young lives are lost to suicide each year. That doesn't include the roughly 157,000 young Americans who are treated for self-inflicted injuries by emergency departments every year.

With the goal of effectively intervening in potential suicides, reducing incidences of self-harm, and thwarting such issues before they blossom into real problems, School District 87 in Bloomington, Ill., adopted Gaggle as part of its 1:1 computing initiative. A Microsoft Office 365 user, the K-12 district encompasses 10 schools and about 5,500 students.

Since implementing Gaggle, the district has identified at least a half-a-dozen cases where administrators believed students were heading down the path to suicide. Thanks to a Gaggle alert, the district was able to act swiftly, intervene, and prevent catastrophe. "Of course, you never actually know because the end result thankfully didn't happen," said Barry Reilly, Superintendent of Schools, "but I'm fully convinced."

On several occasions, Gaggle bypassed administrators entirely and called 911 directly. "They alert us, but they're not going to wait for us to make a decision. If the situation is concerning enough, Gaggle will notify the local authorities right away," said Barry, who expects that level of service from a provider of a student safety platform. "While we do get alerted, you never want to waste time if there is a true crisis situation that could be devastating."

For School District 87, Gaggle has also prevented smaller cases that are not necessarily of equal importance, like two sixth-graders who are using their school email chat feature to make plans to fight after school. "When you catch that early, you can provide some conflict resolution, alert parents, and lo and behold, you've averted that," says Barry. "Whatever might have resulted from that doesn't happen, and kids can avoid getting in trouble."

Before adopting Gaggle, the district had devices and its students had email accounts, both of which started seeing more usage when the district began implementing a 1:1 computer initiative. "We were concerned about what would happen when we went 1:1, with students taking the devices into their own homes and using their own network service providers," said Barry. "We felt there would be a greater risk involved."

Reluctant to allow students to send and receive emails outside of the District 87 domain, Barry said administrators and teachers wanted a monitoring program that they could depend on. "We wanted a

product that could do that monitoring for us and notify us on anything that needed to be followed up on," said Barry. "We now have that great confidence with Gaggle."

Students are also benefiting from the district's open domain. For example, high school students can communicate with potential employers about internship programs using their school domains—something that they couldn't do before. "It gives us greater peace of mind knowing that we've got a product that can help monitor those communications, and alert us if there is anything inappropriate in any sense," Barry added, "whether those communications involve our students or outside parties."

"It's pretty easy to manage; the alerts don't come in very often, mainly it's the junior high," Barry explains. "It's rare for our elementary school to get an alert and it's not very common for the high school either, but we respond quickly every time we get them."

To school districts that are thinking about implementing a student safety service, Barry said the first step is to find a provider that you can trust and that has a good reputation in the K-12 market. Then, make the move quickly to implement this invaluable service.

"Whether it's bullying, student mental health issues, school violence issues, or another problem, this is one of the tools that you really can't be without," said Barry. "It's helping us on a daily basis prevent and/or solve important problems."