



About Victor Valley UHSD

Victor Valley Union High School District serves roughly 10,000 students in grades 7-12 at eight campuses in the cities of Victorville and Adelanto, CA. Their digital curriculum was built with an emphasis on creating a culture of accountability throughout every level of the district.



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VICTOR VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Developing Responsible Digital Citizens while Providing a Safe Digital Environment

Challenge

The Victor Valley Union High School District adopted Google Suite and prior to that, was relying on student reporting and internal monitoring safeguards before identifying a robust digital safety technology system to keep students safe in their school-provided accounts.

Solution

The district chose Gaggle's deep insight and analytics to monitor its 10,000 students in eight schools for violations and incidents when students were using school-provided communication and collaboration tools.

Results

Instead of punishing students for inappropriate online activity, administrators build trust and have one-on-one conversations with students to solve problems and promote better behaviors. Knowing how vulnerable children can be to pedophilia and other criminal acts online, Victor Valley Union High School District in Victorville, Ca., keeps close tabs on any relevant communications that its students may be having with outside sources.

Developing Responsible Digital Citizens while Providing a Safe Digital Environment

Most recently, it intervened when an underage foster child began communicating with an adult male who was planning to “pick her up and run away,” said Dr. Audrey Hovannesian who serves as Director, TechED Department Information Technology, Assessment/Accountability, & Institutional Effectiveness for the district.

“During one email exchange, the adult happened to include a profanity,” continued Dr. Hovannesian, “and Gaggle’s safety management service picked up on it and alerted us to the potential problem.” That, in turn, opened up the entire email conversation and allowed district administrators and the child’s foster parents to intervene in what could have turned into a major incident.

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In other instances, the district has used the emailing monitoring platform to identify students who were using email for online dating and/or escort services, the latter of which were posting profiles that contained nudity. Again, Gaggle caught those activities and reported them to the designated individuals who, in turn, intervened quickly.

Dr. Hovannesian says these and other examples make Gaggle a critical part of the district’s technology stable. “You can’t put a price on a student life or on

educating them on how to be good digital citizens,” Dr. Hovannesian stated. “Safety is the number one priority in this district, yet our staff cannot individually review all student emails and documents for inappropriate behaviors. That’s where Gaggle is paramount.”

Early Warning Signs

A grade 7-12 district with 100 years of service to California’s high desert, Victor Valley relied on student reporting and internal monitoring safeguards before identifying a robust digital safety technology system in place to keep students safe in their school-provided accounts. Before becoming a Google district, it worked with Amplified IT to complete a Google audit, which ferreted out the number of profane words residing in students’ Google Docs.

“We were filtering,” stated Dr. Hovannesian, “but that wasn’t enough.” With about 10,500 students and a 91 percent free and reduced lunch rate, Victor Valley went in search of an online platform that would close that gap while also monitoring student email and documents for inappropriate and safety issue discussions. “We liked Gaggle for its uniqueness in the marketplace and the fact that “real people” are monitoring the online activity.

“Gaggle is awesome because it gives a first or second warning, and we all need a chance sometimes; we all need a wake-up call,” said Dr. Hovannesian. “I get the first warning along with the student, and I don’t act on that unless I read into it and see that there’s something boiling under the surface.”

Roughly 1 percent of students who are “flagged” get called into the principal’s office, typically because they need extra help and intervention. “No one loses technology in this district,” she added. “It’s a growth experience, not a punishment.”

Along with profanity, Gaggle has also identified other verbiage and images that have triggered alerts for administrators. “This is the season where students are writing reflective essays for college entrance, so we do tend to see a lot of reflection on cutting or self-harm—phrases like, ‘I could kill myself right now,’” stated Dr. Hovannesian. “Fortunately, most of those are confirmed to be false alarms and just parts of speech – but we don’t want to miss anything that is much more involved.”

Instilling Good Digital Citizenship

In its second year of using Gaggle, Victor Valley utilizes the platform to help instill good digital citizenship in its students. “I know that some of the perception may be that it’s like having a big brother or a babysitter, but it’s really about discipline through nurturing—and through education—once a student is caught; some of them really need that,” Dr. Hovannesian disclosed. “Others just need to know that the environment is monitored, and parents feel secure that their students are safe.”

Because Victor Valley is a 7-12 district, it’s charged with preparing students to graduate as adults and good digital citizens. In other words, by the time they get into higher education, those students need to already have had their digital citizenship skills embedded.

“For us it’s really identifying what students need in terms of guidance and support to become functioning, wonderful adults in our digital world,” added Dr. Hovannesian. “Technology’s not going away, so they’re going to have to learn how to maneuver and how to behave and act appropriately, because they are going to be using these same tools in their jobs.”