



HESPERIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Uncovering the Unknown of Student Safety

About Hesperia Unified School District:

Located in San Bernardino County, California, Hesperia Unified School District serves more than 22,000 students from the City of Hesperia and adjacent areas in the High Desert of San Bernardino County. The school district includes 15 elementary schools, three middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, two continuation high schools, three choice schools, two alternative schools, five charter schools and an adult education school.

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CHALLENGE:

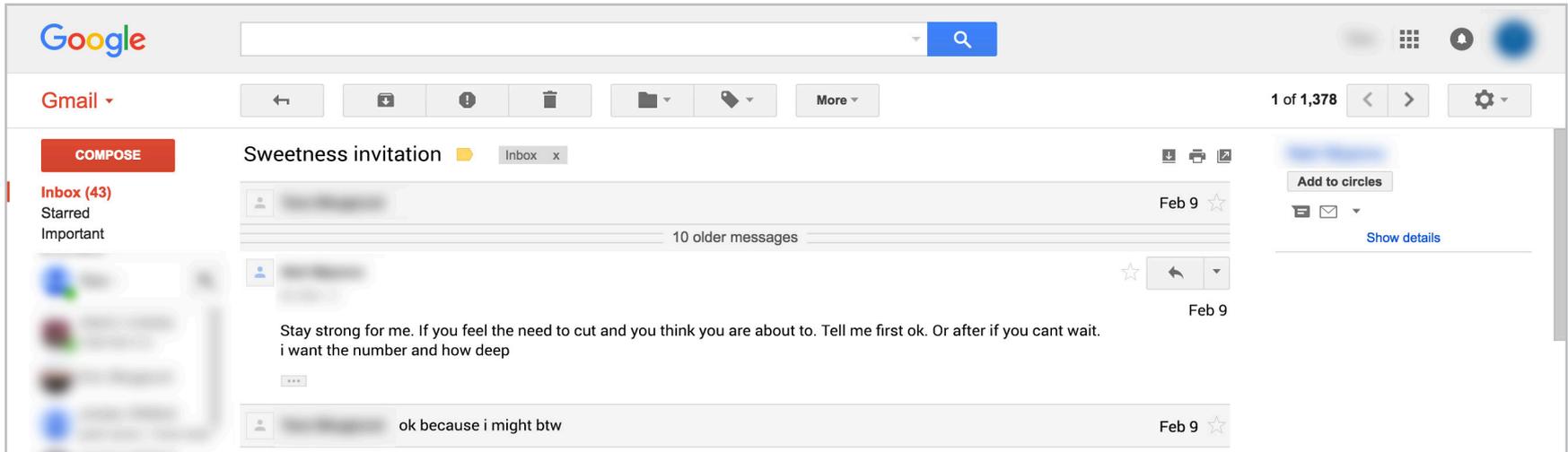
Hesperia Unified School District's decision to put Chromebooks into the hands of every student, starting in third grade, meant that they would have 24/7 access to email, shared documents and much more. While creating 21st-century learners is a top priority throughout the district, it cannot be achieved at the cost of student safety.

SOLUTION:

To protect students from the sundry dangers and threats they face online, the school district implemented Gaggle Safety Management for G Suite as part of its 1:1 initiative.

RESULTS:

Regardless of the time of day, Gaggle Safety Management will notify a district emergency contact if there's an imminent threat to a student. We're extremely grateful that Hesperia Unified shared this story about how one student's life could have been changed forever.



Uncovering the Unknown of Student Safety

On a Tuesday evening in February, this excerpt from an email exchange caught the attention of a Gaggle Safety Representative who was working the late shift on a frigid winter's night. It was after 11 p.m., but the time of day didn't matter to her or administrators at Sultana High School,

including Principal Larry Bird, Assistant Principal Jerry Kaufer and Vice Principals Joseph Martinez and Claire Tarango.

The severe nature of imminent self-harm was paramount. Gaggle Safety Representatives, moreover, sometimes find more egregious threats than one might expect when reviewing student content.

Before the lengthy email exchange, the troubled high school student fabricated a story she told to her mother about a former friend from junior high school who wanted to reconnect in person. When they met at a

local bus station, the girl's mother noticed that the visitor appeared to be considerably older than her daughter. Dismissing it because, as she would later tell law enforcement, "some kids just look older," they all proceeded to take a 90-minute drive to Disneyland.

During the overnight trip, the mother noticed that the girl's friend was overly flirtatious, and the next day she observed physical marks on her daughter.

The email exchange would take place after the mother and daughter returned home.

After contacting the girl's mother and connecting the dots, school administrators and the district's police department uncovered more email messages, including: "You can join our online family of sweets, candy and cakes." District officials, realizing the serious nature of the incident, turned the case over to the San Bernardino County Human Trafficking Task Force, which discovered the "former friend" was a 24-year-old with prior arrests.

"Through the hard work and diligence of so many people, especially the administrators at Sultana High School, we stopped something that could have been life-changing," said Robert McCollum, the lead Gaggle emergency contact at Hesperia Unified, who also is the district's Director of Secondary Education, Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment. "Gaggle was able to pinpoint the suspicious email. Because of that, we were able to drill down and see what was going on."

A Team Approach to Student Online Safety

Interdepartmental communication is key to assuring student online safety and remains a priority at Hesperia Unified. As a former middle school and high school principal, Mr.

McCollum is familiar with student behavior and works with other departments to address concerns about student behavior.

The culture at Hesperia fosters a mutual understanding among departments on the importance of working together to support students and keep them safe. "Student safety is a moving target," said Mr. McCollum. "Kids evolve so quickly, so we need to be in a continuous improvement mode, and that can't fall on a single department. We all need to be involved in the pursuit to keep our kids safe whether that's technology, curriculum or instruction."

In his role as the lead Gaggle Safety Management emergency contact, Mr. McCollum works directly with building principals—like the team at Sultana High School—and helps maintain a consistent flow of information when incidents of self-harm, drug or alcohol use, cyberbullying, harmful family situations and more occur while students are using district-issued devices.

Thanks to the tremendous effort of the district's technology team—led by its director, Michael Tepner—every student, starting in third grade, gets a Chromebook with access to email, as well as Google Drive for older students. Gaggle Safety Management for

G Suite was part of the district-wide 1:1 initiative.

"Our feeling is that if we're serious about taking our kids into the 21st century, we have to put our money where our mouth is," said Mr. McCollum. "It was quite an undertaking that forced us to shift our gears and get out of the factory model of education."

Gaggle Safety Management includes an Anti-Pornography Scanner and customizable Blocked Words List. This is how Safety Representatives discover words and images in student email, email attachments and shared files they review around the clock. When students turn on their Chromebooks, these features are at work.

"Gaggle has helped stop kids from doing some things that were going to change their lives forever," said Mr. McCollum, who is quick to recall another story about a student who was considering cutting himself. That incident resulted in the discovery of a group of students discussing the same action. "It's not just one instance," he said. "Gaggle helps expose the iceberg from underneath the water."