



### About Mooresville Graded School District

Located in Mooresville, North Carolina, Mooresville Graded SD serves 6,200 students across eight schools and was one of the first districts in the nation to adopt a 1:1 approach.



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# MOORESVILLE GRADED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## A Digital Sentry That Keeps Students Safe

### Challenge

With a 1:1 initiative rolled out across all grades, and with students in the third grade and up taking those computers home, the district needed a reliable way to monitor email and files online.

### Solution

Implemented the Gaggle student safety platform and set up a response team that handles alerts on a 24/7 basis.

### Results

Numerous successful interventions ranging from planned physical fights between students to possible break-ins where police were called to investigate.

“With the current state of school violence and safety, we need to have as much information as we can to make sure all of our kids are safe.”

**DR. SCOTT SMITH, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
FOR ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY**

## MOORESVILLE GRADED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# A Digital Sentry That Keeps Students Safe

An urban school district in North Carolina, Mooresville Graded School District has about 6,200 students across a diverse range of demographic groups. With 40% of its students relying on free or reduced lunch, the eight-school district's 1:1 computer initiative has been in place for more than 13 years. Students in grades K–1 have iPads, and those in grades 2–12 have MacBooks that they can take home starting in third grade.

As one of the first districts in the nation to adopt a 1:1 approach, Mooresville Graded SD knew right away that it needed a way to keep its students safe online. Using Google Apps for Education, the district provides students in third grade and beyond with email access and a Google Drive.

Mooresville Graded SD's Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Instruction and Technology, Dr. Scott Smith, said the district's need to protect students online came about once it started assigning them school email addresses. He said the district's high school was the first to adopt the Gaggle student safety platform, with an eye on balancing the need to email colleges and employers with concerns about inappropriate emails and "emailing out to the world."

Next, Mooresville Graded SD added Gaggle in its middle school, followed by the rest of its campuses. "We wanted to make sure that we were protecting our students and their communications," Dr. Smith explained. "It started with email, but as Gaggle added more capabilities (e. g., scanning drives, checking docs, etc.), we did too."

### PROVING ITS VALUE

In place for about 10 years, Mooresville Graded SD's student safety platform has proven its value on numerous occasions. Of particular concern are the alerts regarding possible illegal activity, self-harm, and violence toward others. Depending on the severity of the situation, Gaggle sends out emails to guidance counselors and/or administrators.

For example, when Gaggle recently caught an email discussing a possible physical altercation between two female students, the school's principal, assistant principal, and guidance counselor were all alerted via email. One of those administrators then talked to the student who sent the email, thus diffusing the situation before it turned into a real problem.

"If you are unaware that this stuff is going on, you really can't do anything about it," said Dr. Smith. "The reality is that this activity is going on in the digital world, whether you're 1:1 or not. With the current state of school violence and safety, we need to have as much information as we can to make sure all of our kids are safe."

### PEACE OF MIND

Knowing that Gaggle is continually watching for keywords and other indicators of a problem—and that the technology is backed up by human safety experts who vet the content and decide on the best path forward—helps the administrative team at Mooresville Graded SD rest easier at night.

"What sets Gaggle apart is the fact that there's a real person who notifies us when there's a Possible Student Situation or Questionable Content," Dr. Smith explained, recalling a situation earlier this year when he received just such a phone call at 2:00am. A student who was home alone

had emailed her father (using a school-issued device) about how she locked herself in the bedroom because she thought she heard an intruder in the home.

"When are you coming home?" the email said, "I'm locked in the bedroom. I think somebody's trying to break in." Dr. Smith alerted the local police department to conduct a wellness check on the student. Thankfully, the "intruder" turned out to be an older sibling who was locked out of the house. "Gaggle did what it was supposed to do," he explained.

### A SENTRY FOR DIGITAL CONTENT

For Mooresville Graded SD, being in the know about its students' online activities goes beyond preventing violence, self-harm, and other potentially dangerous situations. It's also about protecting students' emotional well-being. "We're helping students become self-aware and understand that they can get help and support," Dr. Smith pointed out, "knowing that every kid isn't going to just come out and ask."

Instead, some students will email their parents, older siblings, or friends about the problem. When that happens, Gaggle is the sentry that keeps a watch out and is always there to help. "No one questions the fact that they can't just walk onto campus without checking in at the office and having their licenses scanned," Dr. Smith noted. "The same rules apply to our digital content and the access that our students have—or that other people have to our students—via that content. It's imperative that we do everything we can to make our online environment just as safe as our physical environment is."