



#### *About Rowan-Salisbury School System:*

Nestled in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, the Rowan-Salisbury School System is an awarding-winning leader in technology education and has been creatively integrating new technologies within its educational environment. With five support sites and 35 schools, the district has established an ambitious strategic plan that drives its work, including the completion of a comprehensive 1:1 digital conversion.

Visit the district website at [www.rss.k12.nc.us](http://www.rss.k12.nc.us)

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## ROWAN-SALISBURY SCHOOL SYSTEM

# Using Responsive Design to Create Award-Winning Websites

### CHALLENGE:

A school district committed to digital conversion, the Rowan-Salisbury School System found success with a comprehensive 1:1 initiative, but quickly realized those devices, and others, weren't able to properly view the schools' websites.

### SOLUTION:

Within a few months, the school district re-launched 35 websites and a district portal using School & District Websites from Gaggle, developed and designed exclusively for K-12.

### RESULTS:

Since the re-launch, teachers have their own web pages, which are now easy to manage and update. All of the websites use Responsive Web Design and the school district website has been recognized by the North Carolina Public Relations Association.

# Using Responsive Design to Create Award-Winning Websites

It's a huge understatement to say that the Rowan-Salisbury School System is a mobile-first district. Case in point: every teacher and student throughout the district's 35 schools has either a 13-inch MacBook or an iPad as part of a successful 1:1 initiative.

So when Deb Houpe, who serves as the district's Data Integration Specialist, Distance Learning Coordinator and Webmaster, started to hear complaints about how Rowan-Salisbury's websites were failing miserably on mobile devices, she knew it was time for a change.

With School & District Websites from Gaggle, Rowan-Salisbury Schools now has a solution that provides exactly what it needs. But that wasn't always the case. Looking back, there were three reasons to make the switch: lack of Responsive Web Design; slow page load times; and difficulty creating and editing web pages.

## RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Responsive design enables a website to adapt its layout to the requirements of any device. Content and layouts automatically resize to fit any screen, resulting in a consistent user experience and removing the need to create a second website designed specifically for mobile.

"We had a lot of parents complain because our previous websites were microscopic when they were on their smartphones," said Deb.

With responsive design, the more than 200 unique screen resolutions that exist are all addressed with one website design, providing a consistent and optimized visitor experience.

"Many times, we lost up to a quarter of our page or more and the major content and information we wanted to get out there was just missing," recalled Deb. "It just wasn't there at all on smaller devices."

Parents deserve instant access to stay informed about their children, and having websites that use responsive design is the best way to satisfy the immediacy they urge. "We no longer lose any content," said Deb. "Visitors see the same content regardless of their device."

Rowan-Salisbury Schools also previously had to create web pages from scratch. "We had to build the CSS, the page layouts, everything," said Deb. "It was a real cumbersome task and took quite a bit of time."

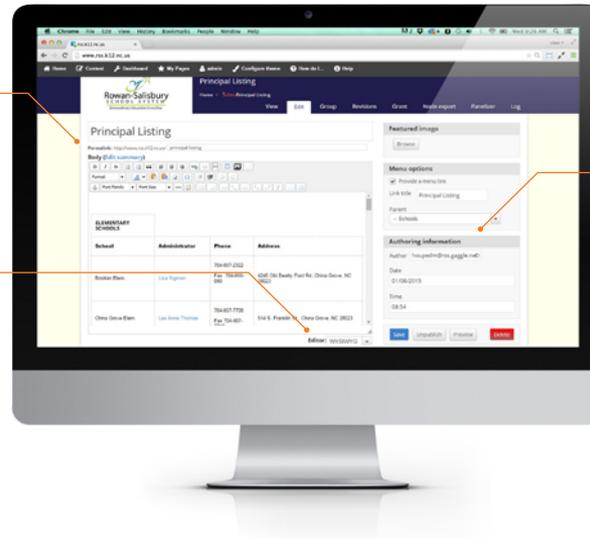
## PAGE LOAD TIMES

The lack of responsive web design meant that websites didn't work well, or at all, on the mobile devices used by students and teachers as well as parents trying to access school and district information from their smartphones and tablets. Lengthy load times forced many to just give up.

Website plug-ins added to the amount of time it took for web pages to load. The district had to pay for any plug-ins, which were supposed to add website functionality, and had to configure

Easily format and align text, create lists, add links, images and more.

Choose from WYSIWYG, HTML or Plain Text editors.



Secure page access for administrators, teachers and other authors.

each one. “A lot of time was spent configuring things and trying to get them to work,” said Deb, “and they didn’t always work as promised and that was another major source of frustration.”

**CREATING & EDITING WEB PAGES**

Updating website content was yet another struggle, especially for teachers. Gaggle’s simple and intuitive WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor allows anyone with the appropriate access, including teachers, to update web pages. “Our teachers started to request web pages to keep their students and parents updated and

in the loop,” said Deb. “The ability to edit is now so easy.”

Gaggle can provision user accounts from either the Gaggle Safe Classroom Learning Management System or another third-party solution so teachers can easily get started creating web pages and a consistent visitor experience when parents go to district, school and teacher pages.

“We’ve been able to handoff pieces to the different departments and now they edit their own web presence and that makes hosting information

much quicker,” said Deb. “They decide they want to post and it’s right there.”

In addition to tons of positive feedback from students, educators and parents, Rowan-Salisbury Schools won a Blue Ribbon Award from the North Carolina School Public Relations Association.

“We want to make sure that our district is viewed in a positive light,” said Deb, “and now we can use our websites to do that.”