About Dixon Public Schools

Home of the Dukes and Duchesses, Dixon Public School District 170 in Northern Illinois is likely best known for its most famous graduate, former President Ronald Reagan. The district's high school, middle school and three elementary schools educate approximately 3,000 students in Pre-K through twelfth grade.

Visit the district website at www.dps170.org

Request your Gaggle demo today.

📞 **800.288.7750**

✉️ **sales@gaggle.net**

🌐 **gaggle.net/demo**

DIXON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District Uses New Websites and Social Media Integration to Engage Community

CHALLENGE:

Dixon Public Schools wanted to re-launch its district and five school websites and replace its outdated content management system and aging server, while giving a small technology staff a more effective way to quickly publish news and information.

SOLUTION:

Gaggle School & District Websites provide Dixon Public Schools with ADA-compliant websites that include mobile-friendly responsive design and built-in K–12 workflow and approval processes.

RESULTS:

The school district now has access to modern web publishing tools and limitless customizations. Websites integrate with social media accounts, helping to facilitate better communication to the entire school community and keeping everyone updated on plans to replace the historic Dixon High School built in 1929.

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The charm and allure of an old school building can draw plenty of positive attention. Conversely, dated facilities and websites will likely get noticed for all the wrong reasons.

While discussions about constructing a new high school gained momentum, it also was apparent that the school district needed to update its website in order to educate the community about the state of its schools and the need for new facilities, including details about a Long Range Facility Master Plan.

An advocate of social media, Superintendent Margo Empen also wanted a website that would integrate better with the district's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Besides using Twitter to help communicate with parents and the local community, the school district relies on social media as a way to drive traffic to the website where news and events are highlighted, including information about a new high school building referendum.

"Our superintendent was looking for something more dynamic, more modern, and a website that would work better with social media," explained Jim Manley, the district's technology director. "The websites were kind of antiquated and had limited functionality."

Another reason to change website providers was the school district's aging infrastructure, including an old server running an outdated version of the Joomla content management system. The district's small technology team of three full-time staffers also needed to direct its attention to other places, like spending more time in classrooms.

"We wanted to get away from having a lot of internal web servers for security reasons," said Jim. "Moving to the cloud helps outsource some of the responsibilities of managing physical servers."

After talking to other tech directors in his personal network, Jim decided to reach out to Gaggle about its award-winning School & District Websites product. Dixon Public Schools already was using Gaggle for email archiving and Safety Management for Office 365.

"You could consider it a goal of any tech director to deal with fewer companies and fewer vendors," he said. "We already had a relationship with Gaggle that was going well for us."

After participating in a demo along with other administrators, it became clear that Gaggle was the right choice. "Once we decided to launch the new websites, it was a pretty easy

process," he said. "We wanted a fresh start, and we had a lot of new ideas." As part of the website re-launch, Jim and his team received webinar training tailored to their specific needs.

Since the school district had been exposed to a hacking incident, it chose to implement the new websites on a new domain along with Gaggle Reputation Management, which protects websites from hackers and malicious use by scanning web page content for inappropriate text and images.

Dixon Public Schools chose Leap Day, February 29, to "leap ahead" with its technology, announcing to students, staff and the entire community that the new websites for the district and its five schools were open for business.

Today, in addition to having a much easier way to create and edit pages, the district is making great use of more modern publishing tools, such as photo sliders and a language translation feature, as well as limitless customizations.

"Everyone quickly realized that the new websites were better, more dynamic and, perhaps most important, saving us all a lot of time," Jim said. "When you look at the whole package of price, value and functionality that's available, I think Gaggle's website product is well worth it and something that I would recommend to any other district."