MOORESVILLE GRADED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Keeping Students Safe, Every Day

About Mooresville Graded SD

Internationally recognized for its digital conversion, Mooresville Graded School District is located about 30 minutes north of Charlotte. A district of approximately 6,000 students, Mooresville provides each student in 4th–12th grade a MacBook to use both at home and at school, and all younger students laptops and iPads to use in the classroom.

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Challenge

After launching a successful 1:1 initiative as part of an acclaimed digital conversion, Mooresville Graded School District (MGSD) realized the need to take further steps to assure their students were safe using G Suite for Education. Administrators plan to expand student collaboration so students can communicate outside the district.

Solution

Gaggle Safety Management for G Suite provides MGSD early warning detection of self-harm, drug or alcohol use, cyberbullying, pornography and other harmful situations that is found in email and files shared in Google Drive. Gaggle integrates with the district's 1:1 devices, assuring students are kept safe both in the classroom and at home.

Results:

In addition to international recognition for its digital conversion and 1:1 program, Mooresville Graded School District is keeping its students safe, closing the digital divide in the suburban district and improving academic achievement, becoming one of the top performing school systems in North Carolina.

Keeping Students Safe, Every Day

Everyone is familiar with the digital transformation at Mooresville Graded School District (MGSD), which has taken place over the past 10 years and continues today. *At least you should be.*

Practically every educational trade publication and mainstream media outlet such as The New York Times has covered the successful initiative, and the district's efforts were rewarded in 2013 when President Obama visited MGSD to announce his ConnectED initiative.

Mooresville is the envy of school districts around the world, proven by the hundreds of educators who travel to Mooresville every year for six different site visits, as well as popular Summer Connection series of workshops that sell out a year in advance. The district is proving that, big or small, rural or urban, rich or poor, a digital transformation where printed textbooks disappear is more than possible.

Former Superintendent Dr. Mark Edwards is quick to deflect a significant amount of the district's success to the technology department and to other school and district leaders who surround him.

"When we started, we didn't focus on the digital citizenship and safety aspects as much as we should," said Dr. Scott Smith, Mooresville's Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Instruction and Technology. "We had to refocus some things, especially around digital citizenship. Protecting our students and keeping them safe online quickly became a priority."

While successful district leaders understand that student online safety is constantly evolving, it remains an absolute priority within a district that has closed the digital divide and improved academic achievement.

"We certainly want to follow all state, federal and local regulations, but we also know that we have to be observant regarding our knowledge, and trying to prioritize safety is an essential part of the equation," said Dr. Edwards. "Mooresville is a highly-collaborative district, so we want to encourage students to communicate and collaborate with each other, but to do so in a safe manner."

The decision to add Gaggle Safety Management for G Suite coincided with the adoption of a modified SAMR Model that focuses on how computer technology can impact teaching and learning. Students currently use their district-issued devices primarily to communicate and collaborate inside the district, but Dr. Edwards and Dr. Smith want to open communication to individuals outside the district and know that Gaggle will be there to help. Gaggle Safety Management combines machine learning technology with real people: Safety Representatives who review content 24/7 and apply consistent, district-approved policies.

Dr. Smith advises other district technology leaders not to look for a "magic bullet" and to plan for student online safety to evolve over time. "We're looking at our students to become global citizens," he said. "Communication is also very important. Our parent advisory and teacher advisory committees, as well as our principals, were all extremely positive about our decision to use Gaggle in our continued efforts around student safety."

Mooresville also works with Common Sense Media and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's NetSmartz program to add digital citizenship components to its curriculum. The district aims to leverage all of its digital resources to become part of a formative process of instruction. "We also see Gaggle as having instructive value, helping students understand appropriate use and accepting social and citizenship responsibility," said Dr. Edwards. "Simple filtering is not enough. Using Gaggle allows us to take a proactive position rather than being reactive."

Since implementing Gaggle Safety Management throughout its 1:1 program, MGSD has created teachable moments for students who send inappropriate content. The district has also been able to offer mental health intervention and get guidance counselors and administrators involved in instances of potential self-harm and other issues. "We would have never known about our students," said Dr. Smith. "And from our culture of caring and loving for our children, that's priceless. You can't put a dollar amount on that."

Both quantitative and qualitative metrics are important to the district and its community when measuring the success of its digital conversion. Last year, MGSD ranked third overall in the state in meeting specific objectives set by the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction. "The pathway to student safety is a continuous path," said Dr. Edwards. "Finding opportunities to enhance that is not just a nice thing to do, it's an obligation. I would suggest to any district in a digital environment, and especially those moving towards 1:1, to consider Gaggle for student safety."