



The Gaggle

Bringing you a Gaggle of News

Volume 5

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September 2009

A Fresh Start for a Great Year!

A new school year, new students, and Gaggle's new Velocity interface make a great combination for success! Starting off with a little preparation will make it simple to integrate Gaggle's Web 2.0 tools into your everyday instruction.

Once your student accounts are created, create User Groups for each of your class periods. They'll be on your To menu when you compose email, and can also be selected when you create specified Homework Drop Boxes, Message Boards, and Chat Rooms.

Homework Drop Boxes are a great way to collect assignments electronically, keeping you organized and saving paper. Both your Assignment Folders and student submissions provide a text box as well as the option to attach documents or other files. A Reply feature lets you send comments back to your students, or you can assess and score their work and return it to them. Start your students with a short autobiography assignment using the Drop Box to

get to know your students and introduce them to the Drop Boxes at the same time.

Take advantage of your own Digital Locker and save on copies by storing documents for you students to access. Your syllabus and class requirements can be stored in your Locker as School Public, so students can print them at home, or simply reference on-line as needed. Make them Internet Public and you can put a link to download them in your Gaggle blog, which can be made public and shared with parents.

Many teachers use their Gaggle blog as a teacher website, posting class information, important web sites, and links to documents and files in their Lockers. It's a simple and effective way to keep parents informed.

For information on how to use these features, visit our collection of Training Videos. You can find them on your Admin Menu. Or attend one of our Back to School webinars!

Have a fantastic start to your year!

Free Webinars

Register for one or more of our free training webinars! Click the link below, choose your session(s), and fill out the registration information. You must use your Gaggle email address to register. You will be sent your personal webinar log in within 2 business days.

To participate in a webinar, you will need Firefox or Internet Explorer on an internet-accessible computer, as well as speakers for the audio. A microphone is not required as you will be able to ask questions using a chat-type interface.

Webinars are approximately 40 minutes long, all times listed are Central Daylight Time.

September Webinar Schedule

Intro to Velocity

An overview of our new interface.

Wed. Sept. 9, 5:00pm

Tue. Sept. 15, 3:00pm

Back to School

Setting up User Groups and other tools for your classes.

Mon. Sept 21, 3:30pm

Wed. Sept. 23, 4:00pm

[Click here to register!](#)

Curriculum Corner

The average 15 year old receives 3,000 texts a month, and probably sends close to that. That's a lot of "text-speak" using abbreviations and poor grammar. But with Gaggle you can enforce proper writing of email as a friendly letter format with proper conventions. Just tell your students you'll choose random sent messages from their account for a writing grade. Even in a content area class, you can reinforce literacy skills and encourage students to use their email in a professional manner.

Gaggle.Net

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School Spotlight

Fort Bend Independent School District, TX

Fort Bend ISD, near Houston, Texas, serves over 70,000 students. In 2007, they started a pilot program to try Gaggle with their middle school students. In addition to using email to communicate with the students, Sandra McCubbin, a district Educational Technology Helping Teacher, created a district-wide literacy project using Gaggle's blogs.

During the first part of the school year, 8th graders in the GT program participate in an online literature circle. They were given a choice of novels, including Eyes of the Emperor, and Make Lemonade, then assigned to small cross-district groups. The 8th grade Language Arts teachers moderated the groups. Using their Gaggle blog, the teachers posted essential questions for discussion among their circle. The students posted their comments to each question on the blog, and were also able to build on the comments of their peers.

This use of the blogs had many benefits for the students participating. It promoted higher level thinking by

using complex questions requiring analysis, synthesis, and evaluation from the students. For example, "How does one define honor in a system that does not treat all people the same?"

The project also fulfilled multiple Texas state standards (TEKS) in language arts, as well as technology applications. Students also benefited socially as they got to know peers from other schools.

Student feedback on the project was overwhelmingly positive, and the project has become an annual event. Students like using blogs and getting to network with like-minded peers. Sandra appreciates the control and safety features that Gaggle provides, and hopes to expand the scope of the literature circles now that the district is moving forward with accounts for every student in grades 6-12.

Learn more about how to set up blogs by accessing our training video collection on your **Jump To-Admin menu**. Happy Blogging!

Tech Talk Customizing Gaggle

Do you know you can customize Gaggle? There are a couple of things you can do personalize the look of your Gaggle accounts.

You can replace our Gaggle.Net logo in the upper left corner with your own school or district logo. You may also set that logo to link to your own URL address, like your school website. You can upload a jpg or gif image file with the proper dimensions (65x200) and set the linked URL on the Basic tab of your School Setup page.

If you'd like to add a custom login box to your school website, or create and host your own login page, Gaggle can provide the HTML code you'll need. Email or call us and we'll send you the file to provide to your Webmaster.

Another way to personalize your Gaggle experience is through the automatically generated Welcome email sent to every new user. If you'd like to customize what it says and have it show a reply-to address within your school/district, contact your Gaggle account manager or customer service.

ASK ADMIN...

Question: Velocity looks great, but I can't find my Address Book and the Directory. Where are they?

Answer: You now have a Contacts folder in the left side bar. If you click it, you'll see your list of contacts, or address book. Click the + symbol to see the sub-folders Directory, and My Groups. You can use the View button at the top of the Directory to see subsets of users, and drag and drop names into your Contacts and Groups.

Please don't hesitate to contact Gaggle's Sales or Customer Service staff if you have any questions!

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