



The Gaggle

Bringing You a Gaggle of News

Volume 4, Issue 7
March 2009

Project Based Learning

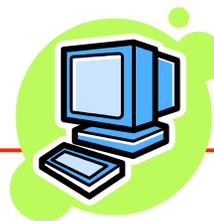
Project-Based Learning is becoming more and more popular in schools today, and is an effective way to motivate students through an inquiry process that stimulates their thinking and includes authentic tasks. According to the Buck Institute for Education, effective projects must meet a number of criteria, including “technology, for learning, self-management, and project management.” They also should encourage collaboration. Gaggle’s student email and advanced features are a natural fit for this methodology.

Most importantly, email gives students the means to safely and professionally conduct personal research with members of their community and experts in the fields included in their project. Students working on a project involving city crime rates, for example, could contact local government officials for statistics, and law enforcement agencies for policies and programs being utilized. They can also easily update group members and the teacher on their progress. Digital Lockers can be used for storing research, resources, and products while they are in process, and can be shared with group members. Teachers can check progress by drilling into student lockers.

Blogs are another tool that could be used in many different ways during the project. Students could record self-reflections throughout the project, or use a General Public blog to solicit feedback or survey their peers or community members. A blog could also be used as a final product to share their results, linking to other products like videos, PowerPoints, and documents stored and shared from their Digital Locker.

Message Boards and Chat Rooms provide forums for discussion and collaboration with other Gaggle schools doing similar projects. And finally, Homework Drop Boxes provide an organized way to turn in components and products.

Project-Based Learning is still in the developmental stages, but can be an exciting way to motivate 21st century learners to master curricular standards while developing crucial technical skills. Using Gaggle with your next project can maximize your time and resources for a successful outcome!



Curriculum Contest Winners

Gaggle’s Curriculum Contest for Educators is under way. The winner for January/February is Melissa Grablovic with a fantastic lesson module for 8th grade that introduces all of Gaggle’s tools. Visit the Curriculum Contest link on our homepage, www.gaggle.net to download the form to submit your lesson, or see the lessons on our blog at www.gaggle.net/blog/curriculumcontest. We’ll choose new winners in April and you could win a \$50 Visa Gift Card!

Velocity Enhancements

We’re continuing to add improvements and new features to Velocity. Here are some to look for!

A new option to remove filtering for emails between students and teachers-Find it on the Advanced tab on the School Setup page.

The students’ administrator can now unblock student Message Board Posts that are blocked. Links to unblock or delete are in the blocked notice.

You can upload a customized logo to your Velocity screen and add a custom URL so when the logo is clicked on, it goes to that page-Find it on the Basic tab on the School Setup Page.

Set the option to default to Velocity when you login, with or without the choice to switch interfaces on the Advanced tab in the School Setup page.

Please don’t hesitate to contact Gaggle’s Sales or Customer Service staff if you have any questions! 800-288-7750 admin@gaggle.net



Schools Spotlight

Patrick F. Taylor Science and Technology Academy,
New Technology High Network

In 2000, Bill and Melinda Gates provided grants to start a new network of schools focused on technology, and the New Technology High Network was created in Napa, California. The Network now has over 40 schools around the country adopting this model that uses student-centered, project and problem-based learning tied to content standards.

New Tech added Gaggle to their technology package starting in the 08-09 school year. Patrick F. Taylor Science and Technology Academy is a New Tech school located in Louisiana. Students communicate with each other and with their teachers via their Gaggle email accounts, and use the Digital Lockers to store files and documents they can access from school or from home.

The Homework Drop Boxes have been very popular and effective for the project-based learning utilized in the school. Teachers create Assignment Folders in their Drop Boxes for students to submit the numerous components of their research results.

Jennifer Ransier teaches a pre-engineering class whose primary project involved robotics. Students learned about robotic components and turned in their results to individual folders for “bevel gears” and “universal joints.” They researched and wrote essays on robotics careers, advances in the field, and shared opinions on the impacts and ethics of robotics. They also used ROBO Pro software to design and create robots of their own.

Using the Homework Drop Boxes allows for easy organization, reduces paper usage, and allows large assignments to be turned in without running into storage space limits. They are a perfect fit for project-based learning, and a real time-saver for teachers trying to get a handle on collecting assignments and keeping them organized.



Ask Admin

Question: I got a message that I've reached my storage limit and my account is frozen, but I only have a few messages in my Inbox.

Answer: Make sure you check the Inbox, Drafts, and Sent folders, and any personal folders you have. Only the Deleted and Blocked folders do not count towards your storage limit. Also, check your Digital Locker. The file and message sizes are what is counted, not the number of messages, so very large files like photos or videos can cause you to reach your limit. Free accounts have only 2.5MB, so you might want to consider a subscription to increase that to 100MB of storage per user.

Tech Talk

System Status Blog

We want to keep our users informed and help school technicians quickly determine if a problem seen at your school is on our side or yours. We have recently created a **System Status Blog** to keep you informed of any major issues that could affect your users.

Visit or subscribe to the blog at, www.gaggle.net/blog/system_status for regular updates. This is a good first step for troubleshooting, and will include notices of planned maintenance or upgrades, which we also post on our homepage.

If you cannot access Gaggle but can reach other websites, it's best to call us at 1-800-288-7750. We use our own email, so if the system does have a problem, we might not receive your email asking about it until after it is solved.

Training Videos

Need some training on Gaggle administration, or a quick walk through of a specific feature in Velocity? Our new Training Videos and tutorials are a convenient way to learn about Gaggle. Educators can access the collection on their Admin menu or through Teacher Help. Students have access to their own tutorials on their Jump To menu in Velocity. We'll also be adding curriculum-focused videos in the next few months. Let us know if there's something you'd like us to add!