



The Gaggler

Bringing you a Gaggle of News

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In My Opinion...

Everyone's got their own opinion, though some of us are more comfortable sharing it than others. Unless you are a blind follower and adopt other people's opinions without question, you base your opinions on information you have gathered, your own life experiences, and thoughts of people you have been exposed to. All of that data ends up in your brain and you think about it, resulting in your own opinion. While we don't often stop to label all the different skills we use to do this, we have to progress through Bloom's taxonomy and use the higher level skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, in order to formulate an opinion.

Students need to do the same thing, with lots of opportunities to practice those skills. How can educators tap into their natural desire to express an opinion? The answer is pretty simple: present them with questions that push them to think! But with limited class time and students who may view writing as dull or archaic,

or are nervous about speaking out loud, throwing in an occasional class discussion or asking them to write an opinion paper won't be that effective.

Technology can help! Message Boards are a great way to provide frequent opportunities for authentic discussions either on content area topics or local or global issues that our constantly connected kids care about. Ask them how they feel about current events like the recovery after the earthquake in Haiti, healthcare, or President Obama's desire to increase the time spent in school. You'll get those brains thinking and give them a safe environment to express themselves and defend or change their opinions. And while you're meeting content standards, and promoting thinking skills, you'll also be giving them extra writing practice!

Institute a weekly or monthly message board discussion with your students and get them thinking!

Curriculum Corner

Instead of having to choose a weekly topic for a discussion board yourself; get your students to do it! Try starting the board with an assignment for everyone to post one or two topics or statements they want to discuss or debate. Then you'll have a selection to pick from that you know they are interested in. Or assign each student a week and they can be responsible for coming up with the initial post and even moderating the discussion that week.

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.

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

This month's webinar will show you how to create and integrate message boards with your curriculum and tips on how to engage students in meaningful discussion and higher order thinking.

Integrating Message Boards

Thursday, Feb 18th
4:00 pm – 4:45 pm

Tuesday, Feb 23rd
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm

Thursday, Feb. 25th
4:30 pm – 5:15 pm

Thursday, March 4th
3:30 pm – 4:15 pm

[Click here to register!](#)



School Spotlight

Goldenview Middle School, Anchorage, Alaska

Andy Holleman, the Technology Coordinator for Goldenview Middle School in the Anchorage School District, was a technology pioneer when we decided his 7th and 8th grade students needed to use email in 1998. After it became clear that free Hotmail or Yahoo accounts, were not safe or controllable, he was going to abandon the project, until he attended a technology conference in spring, 2000, and discovered Gaggle.

Andy implemented Gaggle for his classes immediately, and in the fall, the entire school came on board.

In addition to providing students experience with electronic communication in a professional environment, mirroring what they will encounter in the work world, Andy credits the use of Gaggle with improving overall classroom atmosphere by “clearing the deck of slang and foul language.”

Goldenview remained a Gaggle customer for years, utilizing Erate

funding in recent years to cover most of the cost. But last year they were tempted by another provider promising similar safety features at a lower price, and moved to that system.

They learned pretty quickly that the safety features were only the ability to create rules, and nothing was provided out of the box. The task of trying to bring that system to the level of security they needed would take weeks of Andy’s work time, and “even then would fall far below the convenience and control and sophistication that Gaggle had been offering.”

Happily, Goldenview Middle School was able to terminate that contract, and is back using Gaggle accounts with their students. Andy appreciates Gaggle as a “turnkey solution” that has provided a “safe, organized tool for teachers, and also created a safe community for students-24/7.” And Gaggle appreciates innovative educators like Andy!

Tech Talk

New Live Chat Support

Gaggle now has live chat support! All users at the Teacher access level and above can immediately access one of our customer service representatives with just a click of the mouse during our regular business hours (7am-6pm CST).

This feature is located on the Jump To menu in your Gaggle account. Click Live Chat Support to open a window and get help with any questions you may have about Gaggle. The chat interface is simple to use, and you have the additional option to have a copy of the conversation sent to you via email so you’ll have a record of any steps or instructions you received.

After hours, that link will let you leave a message which will be automatically forwarded to our admin@gaggle.net address which is monitored evenings, weekends, and holidays, so we may get back to you as soon as possible.

ASK ADMIN...

Question: How can I find key pals from another school using Gaggle?

Answer: Gaggle has Message Boards for educators to post or respond to requests for key pals. Go to Message Boards on your Jump To menu and choose the Educator Message Boards category to view those. If you know a teacher in another school who wants to connect but doesn’t have Gaggle, let them know they can contact us to get free accounts for their class.

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

800-288-7750
admin@gaggle.net