The Fight Against Spam

Everyone with an email account has had personal experience with unsolicited advertisements, stock tips with questionable links, notices of winning contests you never entered, or a letter informing you that a wealthy stranger wants to give you millions of dollars. Spam is a constant problem, and email providers, including Gaggle, fight a never-ending battle to keep up with the tricks that professional spammers use to get their garbage into your inbox.

The latest concentrated attack was quite sophisticated, with spammers spoofing the sender's address so it looked like you had sent the spam message to yourself. We want you to know how hard we work to prevent these kinds of messages from getting to your and your students' accounts.

Our first line of defense is an anti-spam system that scans all incoming messages, and stops recognized spam at our servers. This system uses sophisticated technology to identify spam, and is constantly updated with new rules. Over 97% of spam sent to Gaggle addresses is stopped at this level, and you never see it.

Inevitably, some spam messages will make it to your Inbox, as spammers try new tricks to get around our system. For added protection, spam sent to student addresses will pass through our Blocked Word filter, which will catch inappropriate subject lines and text, as well as our Anti-Pornography Scanner. The APS will catch bad images in the email, and will scan any URLs in the message body.

The APS is a highly technical system that "reads" an image as a block of data, looking for specific patterns that are commonly pornographic. It cannot read text within an image, because it sees only the pixel patterns. So a word that might be blocked normally could get through when it is embedded as an image because the computer can't read it.

You can help in the fight against spam by reminding your students not to use their Gaggle account to sign up for anything on the internet, which could get them put on a list sold to spammers. You can also click the Report Spam Button to send us a copy of suspected Spam and help our system better identify unsolicited messages.

Curriculum Contest Winners

Gaggle's Curriculum Contest for Educators is under way. The first monthly winners have been selected! Tamara Simms won the top prize with her keypals project for elementary students. What are you doing with Gaggle? Visit the Curriculum Contest link on our homepage, www.gaggle.net to see December's Honorable Mentions, and download the form to submit your lesson. We'll choose new winners in February and you could win a $50 Visa Gift Card!

The Gaggler is Growing!

The Gaggler is now two pages! We've got more to share than we can fit on a single page, so we've added a few new features.

Check out our new **Schools Spotlight** on page 2! This new column will highlight one of the schools or districts that are using Gaggle. We'll share a bit about the district and some of the ways they use Gaggle email and tools to support their students.

The **Tech Talk** section will highlight technical information, tips and updates regarding the Gaggle system and how it works with your school's network and computers.

And finally, **Ask Admin** will share some of the common questions we get to our customer service through admin@gaggle.net. If you've got a question you'd like to see in a future edition, send it to us and mention the Gaggler.

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
Lamar AEP, Grand Prairie Independent School District

Grand Prairie ISD is located between Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas serving a diverse population of more than 23,000 students. The district is in their third year with Gaggle. They started with a small number of subscription accounts, and each year have steadily increased the number of teachers and students using the service.

A few months ago, Dana Seeyle, an English teacher at the Lamar Alternative Program, became interested in using Gaggle with her students. Knowing that their accounts would be filtered and monitored, the district provided subscription accounts for her class.

As a special holiday project, Dana decided to have her class create a holiday cookbook on a Gaggle blog. They followed a format for posting their recipe, a photo, and a written commentary about the history and significance of the dish in their family. By setting "Blog Approval Required", Dana was able to review each entry, and help her students revise and edit before the final posting.

The completed cookbook was a huge success and had some unexpected outcomes in addition to supporting tech skills and literacy. Students asked their parents about the traditions behind their holiday meals, which opened up cross-generational dialogue and taught them personal history. The students connected with each other as they discovered commonalities in their families' traditions and backgrounds. Most importantly, these teenagers with troubled pasts and less than successful educational careers created something they were proud of.

An example of one student's story accompanying her recipe:
"This pie was made by my great grandma. It was passed along to my nanny and my mom and then to me. We used to have it every Thanksgiving, but since my great grandma died we have it pretty much on every holiday. Everyone in my family loves it and it reminds us of our great grandma, nanny, and our mother. It's my favorite thing about the holidays and the main reason I get so excited about the holiday breaks!"

Director of Technology, Sharon Manterola, was so inspired and impressed with the students' effort, she personally worked to turn the Holiday Cookbook blog into a printed and bound full-color book for each student to keep. It was an unexpected gift they received before their winter break.

Ask Admin

Question: I'm a student and I can't log in to my account. It says my login is invalid. Can you help me log in?

Answer: Are you using a custom domain? If your school email address is something other than "@gaggle.net," you should try putting in your entire address in the User Name field on our home page. If you have forgotten your password, you will need to ask a teacher to reset it for you. For security reasons, Gaggle cannot give out or reset passwords for students.

Tech Talk

Gaggle.Net's service is an integral part of the daily education of countless students all over the world, and our tech team strives to provide a consistently reliable system. Our uptime average is 98.5%, but as with any technology, there can be occasional glitches. While it seems like a simple click, and email is sent or received, it is in fact very complex. There are many steps and different hardware components and services through which each message travels, and a problem in any one spot can halt that process.

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.