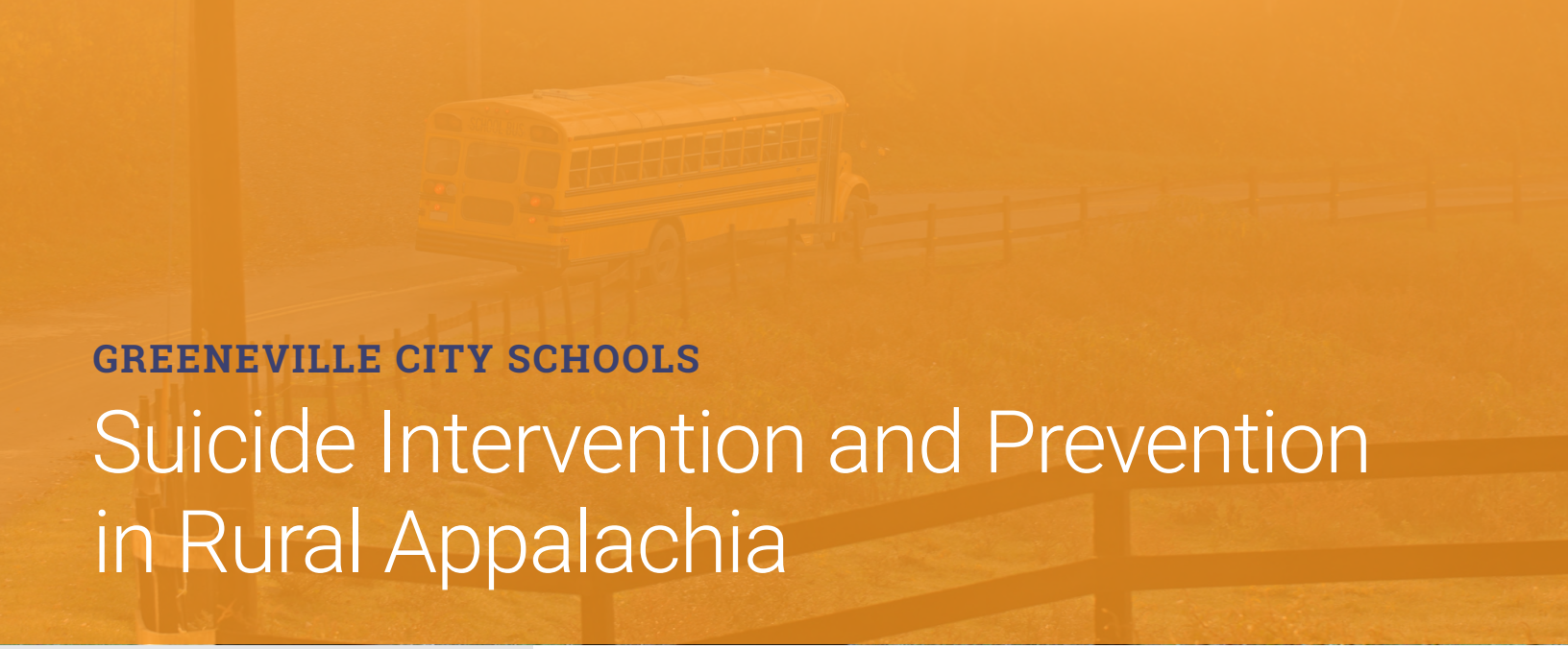

GREENEVILLE CITY SCHOOLS

Suicide Intervention and Prevention in Rural Appalachia

ABOUT GREENEVILLE CITY SCHOOLS

Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in rural Tennessee, Greeneville City Schools serves about 3,000 students across seven schools.

Challenge

Not enough time in the day for an individual—or the district as a whole—to monitor how students are using their devices in this 1:1 Tennessee school district.

Solution

Gaggle provides an extra set of eyes to keep track of what students are saying and feeling in the district's Microsoft Office 365 environment.

Results

Greeneville City Schools has intervened in multiple suicide attempts, as well as other attacks, incidents involving self-harm, and the sharing of inappropriate content.

It was nearly midnight when Greeneville City Schools' IT Network Administrator Larry Jones called Beverly Miller's mobile phone, voicing concern about a female student who had laid out the framework for an extremely detailed suicide plan online. "Gaggle discovered it and alerted Larry," said Miller, the district's Assistant Director for Administration and Chief Technology Officer.

Without delay, the pair facilitated mental health services and support for the young student, whose parents were extremely grateful for the successful intervention. "They had no idea that their daughter was depressed," said Miller. "She put on a happy face at home and was very involved with school and social activities."

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Fortunately, the district's student safety platform recognized the potential problem quickly and alerted the right people about the issue. "This alert triggered a series of events that literally led to this young woman receiving the mental health services and support she needed not only to survive but also to thrive," Miller said. "At that point, Larry and I looked at each other and said, 'We can never allow this school district to be without Gaggle again.'"

WATCHING THEIR BACKS

Situated in Greeneville, Tennessee, Greeneville City Schools serves about 3,000 students across four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and a dedicated Career and Technical (CTE) School. A 1:1 district that issues Windows 10 laptops and iPads to all students, it had a student safety platform on its must-have list before getting the funding for the initiative for the 2017–18 school year.

"I'm not going to see a student writing a suicide note on my content filter, but Gaggle can tell me instantly if a student is in distress."

Jones said Gaggle allows him to review the information that students save to the OneDrive cloud storage platform and what they're communicating about. It also contextualizes searches and pulls everything together into a format that's easy to search and reference.

"Gaggle also gives me flexibility," Jones added. "We're a small team of five, and until we implemented Gaggle, I was the only set of eyes on the ContentKeeper feed that was coming in, which meant that even after hours, I would very frequently check to make sure that our students weren't searching for things that were inappropriate or dangerous."

Jones now knows that his student safety platform is watching his back and keeping him informed. "I don't feel like I have to get up every 20 minutes and look at the content filter feed," said Jones, who is also now privy to information about student activity that he wouldn't have been aware of otherwise. "I'm not going to see a student writing a suicide note on my content filter, but Gaggle can tell me instantly if a student is in distress."

24/7 STUDENT SAFETY

According to Miller, Greeneville City Schools' student safety platform has benefitted the district in ways that simply can't be measured from a quantitative perspective. "Most of us can't afford to have someone on the clock 24/7, but Gaggle is putting that person on my clock 24/7 to watch the data," said Miller.

"We literally have the opportunity to save a student's life with Gaggle. How could we turn and walk away from an opportunity like that?"

This gives the district an advantage in a world where the first sign of a troubled student often surfaces in an email or a saved document, both of which Gaggle monitors around the clock.

"It's obviously far better to find a suicide note before the student harms themselves than it is to find it in a forensic analysis of their documents after they've completed the action," said Miller. "We literally have the opportunity to save a student's life with Gaggle. How could we turn and walk away from an opportunity like that?"