About South Kingstown School District

South Kingstown School District is a public school district located in South Kingstown, RI. They have over 2,900 students and seven schools.

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SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rhode Island School District Adopts Gaggle Monitoring and SpeakUp to Address Potential Problems Before They Happen

Challenge

District needed a platform that would allow students to speak up about bullying, drugs, or unhealthy relationships.

Solution

Student safety platform combined with Gaggle SpeakUp provide a safe environment where students can voice concerns and stay safe online.

Results:

Since implementing the platform, the district has identified and intervened in a number of different potentially dangerous situations involving its students.

Rhode Island School District Adopts Gaggle Monitoring and SpeakUp to Address Potential Problems Before They Happen

Encouraging kids to speak up about their problems and concerns is an age-old challenge that everyone from teachers to guidance counselors to parents deal with every day. But when you give students a mouthpiece for speaking up—and doing so in a safe, confidential way—magical things happen.

Just ask Doug Snow, Director of Technology at South Kingstown Public Schools in Rhode Island. As part of the district's Gaggle student safety platform implementation, it also adopted Gaggle SpeakUp, a safe environment where kids can voice concerns about bullying, drugs, unhealthy relationships, or other issues without feeling as though they'll get themselves or their peers in trouble.

Once submitted, those concerns are being looked into by professionals, 24/7/365. In the most severe cases, Gaggle will contact law enforcement to intervene. "We've received calls at 2AM telling us that someone was contemplating suicide," Snow recalled. "We jumped on it, talked to the parents, and handled the situation successfully."

He said the fact that the platform provides a heads-up on these and other student-centric issues makes it well worth the investment. "It's worth every penny," said Snow. "If it saves just one student—or prevents him or her from going down a certain path—then it works."

Putting a Platform in Place

South Kingstown Public School's student safety platform was put in place about 3-1/2 years ago. The district had recently adopted Google Classroom, and was handing out email addresses and capabilities to all of its students in grades 3-12 (grades 7-12 are on a take-home 1:1 program).

Snow said the district's administrators had immediate concerns about the Google tools and about how they could be used for bullying, threatening other students, and other potentially-harmful situations. "If they threaten the president, we're responsible. If they bully other kids, we're responsible," Snow explained. "We had no way of seeing what they were doing."

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Even with a student safety platform in place, students have the tendency to get crafty with their workarounds. In one instance, they were using Morse code to communicate in a more undercover way. "I actually thought it was pretty impressive that they were using an 1800s technology to go around the system," says Snow, who later learned that they were using an app to translate the Morse code.

He Can Sleep at Night

Since being implemented, Gaggle has helped South Kingstown Public Schools identify and intervene in a number of different potentially dangerous situations involving its students. In one instance, students were waiting in line for the latest video game release and watched a group of people pull up in a "shady looking" vehicle. When one of them started talking about shooting up a school, the student submitted a SpeakUp comment about it.

"We called around to let the other districts know that this happened, had undercover police officers on campus in the morning, and stood at the front door greeting every student," Snow recalled. "Maybe they were kidding about the school shooting, but it doesn't matter. That's just one-way Gaggle helps us stay ahead of things."

Gaggle also helps the district stay on top of frequent changes in the Google platform. "Gaggle's kept up with that," he said. "I get burned all the time by Google and I don't know how Gaggle keeps up with it, but it does. I can sleep at night knowing that I don't have to worry about it."