



# The Gaggle

Bringing You a Gaggle of News

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## Here Comes Velocity!

Our new interface, called Velocity because of its increased speed, has been available to our users for the last year. We wanted our existing users to have an opportunity to try it out while still having the option to switch back to the 3.0 interface they knew and loved. But as with all growth and change, there comes a time when we must say goodbye to the old and embrace the new.

Many schools starting Gaggle this year have already embraced Velocity and set it as their default option. By July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, every Gaggle account will be using Velocity only. As the initial step in this transition, all schools using the free version of Gaggle will be switched to Velocity on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

If you haven't seen Velocity yet, you can check it out now. It's available on your Jump To menu. Once there, you'll find all the current features, just with a different look and feel.

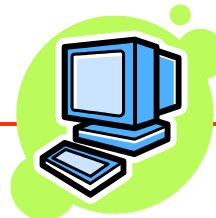
There's new functionality like drag-and-drop, and right clicking to do some tasks like creating new folders and some administrative access. You'll find

folders in the Digital Locker for better organization, new search capabilities, and completely new features like our Portal Links and Homework Drop Boxes (subscription only).

The School Setup page has a number of new settings like the ability to remove blocking from messages between teacher and student Gaggle accounts, or set the Digital Lockers to notify teachers of potentially inappropriate files but making them instantly accessible to the students. You can also personalize Gaggle for your school by uploading your school logo, and linking it to your school or district website.

We trust you will love the new look and feel of Gaggle's Velocity, and we will provide our usual excellent customer service for any questions or concerns you have. Don't hesitate to write to us at [admin@gaggle.net](mailto:admin@gaggle.net) or call us if you need help.

Welcome to Velocity!!



## Curriculum Contest Winners

**We need your curriculum submissions! With few lessons coming in, we will combine April & May, with the \$500 Grand Prize Drawing in June. The winner for March is Leslie Keene with her Chat It Up! Book Club for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders using Message Boards. Visit the Curriculum Contest link on our homepage, [www.gaggle.net](http://www.gaggle.net) to download the form to submit your lesson, or see the lessons on our blog at [www.gaggle.net/blog/curriculumcontest](http://www.gaggle.net/blog/curriculumcontest). We'll choose new winners in May and you could win a \$50 Visa Gift Card!**

## Free Velocity Training

We want to help you get the maximum benefit from Velocity and have a number of resources to help.

Our Velocity Quick Start Guides are available online, and can be accessed through the Teacher Help link on your Admin menu.

The Training Videos link is also available on your Admin Menu in Velocity. The video titled Velocity gives an overview of the changes, or you can watch general trainings for different access levels, and tutorials on specific features. Students will see a small selection of training videos just for them on their Jump To menu.

You can also join one of our trainers for a free webinar. Introduction to Velocity is about 45 minutes long, and will be offered a few times prior to the May 1<sup>st</sup> transition. Click one of the links below to register. You can join from school or home.

[Sat., April 25th-11 am CDT](#)  
[Mon., April 27th-3pm CDT](#)  
[Thurs., April 30th-6pm CDT](#)



## Schools Spotlight

### School District of Osceola County, FL

The School District of Osceola County is located just a few miles south of Orlando Florida and currently has a population of approximately 52,000 students. The district has been using Gaggle since 2006 as they continue to promote technology in the classroom.

One Gaggle feature that sees frequent use within Osceola County is the Digital Locker. Students can work on a project at school, upload it to the digital locker and then access that file while working on the computer at home or anywhere they can access the Internet.

Instructor Ms. Stephanie Middleton feels that Gaggle has revolutionized her classroom. Ms. Middleton is a Social Studies instructor and the History Department Chair at PATHS (Professional and Technical High School) and she and her students both put their Digital Lockers to maximum use. Any file that Ms. Middleton wants her students to be able to access is placed in her own Digital Locker. Students know that if they need to view a picture, review the PowerPoint lecture, or access the study guide, all they have to do is go to Ms. Middleton's Digital Locker. Everyone appreciates how easy it is to quickly access necessary information from any computer, at any time. When asked to comment on the use of Gaggle in the

classroom, Ms. Middleton said, "Gaggle has revolutionized my teaching and communication with students. It allows me to offer homework help when students need it, helps ESOL, ESE and shy students communicate with me. Gaggle allows teachers to meet digital natives on their turf and teach with 21<sup>st</sup> century tools. Our students need to learn how to use these tools in an appropriate manner in order to prepare for their futures."

Denn John Middle School is another school in the district utilizing Digital Lockers, as well as other Gaggle tools. Their focus on the importance of technology is apparent in their mission statement: *Preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century through a commitment to rigor, relevance, relationship.* Currently, students are creating a series of Gaggle commercials with the first in the series being about how cool it is to have a Digital Locker.

Digital Lockers allow file storage on our servers, saving you the cost of providing and maintaining space on yours, while adding access from just about anywhere!



## Ask Admin

**Question:** A student email was blocked as a possible mail bomb. What does this mean?

**Answer:** When a message is intentionally sent multiple times to a recipient to flood their inbox, it is called a mail bomb. Our system checks to see if the same recipient address is listed more than once in the To and CC fields, and if so, blocks it. For most students it is accidental, and you always have the option to unblock it. But it's a good idea to explain this rule to your students so they can avoid unnecessary blocking.

## Tech Talk

### Optimizing Your Computers for Velocity

Our new Velocity interface uses Web 2.0 technology, and will function best if your computer is up to date and has current versions of a few common plugins.

While it works with most browsers, Velocity is optimized for Internet Explorer 7 and Mozilla Firefox. Computers still using Internet Explorer 6 will have some issues, particularly with uploading and downloading attachments and Digital Locker files.

Browser developers are competing to make their new versions run Java script faster than ever. Since Velocity uses Java, its speed and performance will continue to improve even more as companies like Microsoft and Mozilla develop and release new versions of their browsers.

Velocity also utilizes Flash. At minimum, you'll need Flash version 9, though like all technology, the newest version is usually the best. You can download the newest version at <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

Technology changes rapidly, and Gaggle works hard to stay at the forefront. You can get the best experience possible by taking advantage of updates to your browser and plug-ins.

*Please don't hesitate to contact Gaggle's Sales or Customer Service staff if you have any questions! 800-288-7750 [admin@gaggle.net](mailto:admin@gaggle.net)*