

Gaggle/FCC Response

It has come to our attention that the FCC is considering the removal of collaboration tools for student learning from the E-Rate Eligible Services. As a district, we believe that this would be devastating our instructional practices and would be detrimental to the education of our students. E-rate funding assists districts in providing tools that are required in order to prepare students for the 21st Century environment in which we live.

In 2012, CIPA included a requirement that districts must have a curriculum in place to guarantee that all students receive instruction in digital literacy. The categories for this instruction include the following 21st Century Skills: collaboration tools, social networking, digital literacy, searching and downloading, privacy, and cyber-security. For a district to be able to teach these tools, students and teachers must have access to online tools that provide a safe platform for the instruction.

Our district adopted Gaggle in the spring of 2013 in order to provide 21st Century Tools for our students. Within this integrated set of tools, our students will have everything that they need to fully participate in a safe, online environment. Our students can participate on a social wall and have access to educational videos without the worry of inappropriate content.

Gaggle provides a layer of confidence for teachers and parents that ensure students are participating in an online environment with appropriate controls that allow for teaching safe online behavior. Gaggle has a human monitor that responds to all student interactions that are flagged in the filter as a concern. This includes content that the student creates, and also that which the student receives. As a result, our teachers are better able to provide instruction, while others focus on the negative influences that can occur in an online environment.

For us, email is only one of the online tools that students need to be prepared to use in the 21st Century. Our enthusiasm for this set of tools is heightened because they are all integrated into a single platform for learning in the 21st Century. The workplace of today is happening in a collaborative, global environment. Students must be prepared to enter into this environment. The only way this will happen is if they experience it as a part of their education, which will not happen if schools cannot afford to provide them to their community.

There should be no distinction between web hosting, email, and collaboration tools for E-Rate Funding for schools. These tools are all part of an integrated environment that our students must be prepared for and educated in order to participate in the workforce of tomorrow. Without this funding assistance, these tools would be out of reach for our district and we would be unable to provide them for our students.