

Holy Redeemer Catholic High is going GOOGLE !

Over the course of the next few weeks we are rolling out Google Apps For Education (GAFE) to the students in our school as part of a district wide initiative to upgrade the technology infrastructure aimed at meeting 21st Century learning objectives. Alberta Education has recently adopted new technology goals that direct all schools in our province, the primary one being: "Technology is used to support student-centred, personalized, authentic learning for all students."¹ GAFE is our Division's chosen framework that provides student-centered experiences closely aligned with this direction from Alberta Education. This technology platform (GAFE) is already being widely used throughout Alberta schools and postsecondary institutions. Living Waters Catholic Schools is joining the GAFE community to meet Alberta Education's mandate for its schools to assist our children in becoming digitally literate and ethically responsible citizens.

As with any new initiative there are certain 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ's) that arise from parents - all the way from, 'What if I am not comfortable with my child having an e-mail account?' to, 'This is fantastic - what device should I be purchasing for my child so that he/she can maximize their learning opportunities with GAFE?' The following are some of the FAQ's asked by parents in the past:

What services will students have access to in GAFE?

Students will have a standard suite of applications that include email, document management and creation (word processing, spreadsheets, presentations) in a collaborative setting. Google provides a framework for a variety of web based services to connect to this basic suite so that data storage is centralized in a location that is available to students anytime, anywhere on virtually any device. Students are provisioned with a user ID (this is also their email address) and password to access these services.

How does GAFE differ from public or corporate GOOGLE offerings?

Google offers the same services to the public for free and to business clients on a pay per seat basis. Google does utilize anonymized client data in these offerings to facilitate and customize their advertising business. Google Apps for Education is a service that is **not** subject to the same data mining principles. Students will never see advertising in the core Google services and the data stored in the school system belongs to the school. Administration has the ability to monitor student communication and data creation and manage the services that students have access to.

What advancements does GAFE provide students over our current technology in the school?

Currently we do not have a collaboration platform - meaning no easy way for students to share their work and no way for them to communicate electronically with their teacher or each other. The applications we use are dependant on a specific technology platform and students do not have an easy way to take assignments home or work on them on devices that they bring to school.

GAFE provides a platform that is accessible from anywhere there is an internet connection. Students will have the option to create content on their own or collaborate on the creation of one group document. Teachers can easily monitor progress and add insights throughout the document creation process without printing a page.

How can we monitor against "cyber-bullying" or other inappropriate usage?

¹ Policy Direction 1 "Student Centered Learning"
Learning and Technology Policy Framework 2013

The school division employs a number of techniques to reduce the inappropriate usage of all internet services. If suspicion of inappropriate usage arises, school administration can examine the contents of a student's "digital locker." Teachers always have visibility into student document libraries and as such are watchful for inappropriate content. That said, we do not have a team of people to examine every communication and document and we do expect that students will treat the privilege of accessing this platform of tools with respect. Part of the Alberta Education objectives includes ongoing digital citizenship training and GAFE provides teachers with authentic opportunities to teach responsible usage.

Orientation exercises that students receive when they are given access to the Google digital locker include how to protect your account and the appropriate rights and responsibilities - terms of agreement - to using the services. Students are told that if they see any inappropriate usage or receive communication from people who are not part of their education community, they should report it to teachers or parents right away. We encourage parents to sit down with their child and login to the service together - we recommend that parents are the ONLY people who their child should share their login id and password with. In this way the student knows that this is an account for the "business" of education.

What personal devices would be most appropriate to purchase for my child to assist them with access to GAFE?

Basically any modern devices (2 years old and newer) should have the ability to access the "digital locker" we are working with. If you have a personal computer or laptop at home you can support your child in their exploration of the Google world. We will be using regular desktop computers as well as laptops in the school.

What if I am uncomfortable with my child having an e-mail address?

The email account is the central point of entry for many of the activities that child will be doing with their Google tools. It is the credential used to login to the system - giving access without the email functionality would severely hamper the teachers ability to communicate with the students in the class. The e-mail address provided by the school essentially becomes the student's 'business' e-mail and needs to be treated as such.

We understand that for some parents provisioning their child with an Internet enabled account may be daunting. However we truly believe that this platform is a measured and controlled approach that will enhance the ability of your child's teacher to provide technology tools that have cross curriculum reach. GAFE gives our students a toolset that will serve them throughout their educational life and into their chosen career paths.

The attached document is Holy Redeemer's ***Appropriate Use of Technology Agreement***. **Please read and provide consent (sign this document), then return it to the school in order for your child to access our new GAFE digital technologies at the school.**

Thank you, once again. Should you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact the school at 780-723-7437