Bulloch schools go Google

Educators hope to provide safe, secure ‘24/7 virtual classroom’

By JASON WERMERS

The Bulloch County school system is going Google.

The district has partnered with Google — at no cost to host a secure, ad-free web portal known as Google Apps for Education. Students and Bulloch County school employees who log on to the district’s Google Apps for Education will be able to use Google applications to do things such as communicate via email and create, share and store documents, spreadsheets and presentations. Parents will not have their own accounts, though the school system does encourage parents to log in with their children.

All of this can be done on any device that can access the Internet, and anything that is created on these apps is stored in the “cloud,” meaning users can log into their accounts and access their Google materials anywhere.

During a school board meeting Thursday evening, board member Chatt Wagner expressed concern that using Google Apps would violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

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From Memory, with gratitude

By JENNY LYNN ANDERSON

A memorable afternoonto. ...in the history of the World War II. ...en a woman. ...The Frenchman knelt before ...his shoulder to shoulder. ...the whis...could come up with was Metz, France.

While sitting in the gazebo at Willow Hill Assisted Living, Velma Walkers reminisces with husband R.L., who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. "We've lived a good life, haven't we?" asked Velma. "I wonder if it wouldn't change a day of it, answered R.L.

A large French woman knelt before Charlie. He himself, 'Why him and not me?' Charlie is 94 years old. The man who fought in several battles, but the only name he could come up with was Metz, France.

The Frenchman knelt before Charlie. He recalled standing next to a good friend of his, shoulder to shoulder, and then seeing him killed with one snipper shot before his very eyes. Charlie still asks himself, 'Who hit him and not me?'

In another episode, Charlie's men were in a large building, possibly a warehouse of some kind. They smelled coffee brewing, but none of his men would admit to it. Charlie started investigating and finally discovered what they were drinking.
Google Apps for Education, Google's website. But with all students and employees able to access it, teachers can "provide tighter security in other places?" asked Superintendent Charles Wilson said: "This is a tool that can be used to support education." He said teachers can "figure out how to grow here, how to adapt ... and, eventually, as students and — especially — parents and staff become more comfortable with Google Apps for Education, the district will explore allowing high school students to email students from another Bulloch County high school district-run platform, meaning that whatever students and employees while logged in, they are subject to student and employee codes of conduct. Any violations of those codes, such as sending an inappropriate email to another student, would be punishable just as though the offense had happened in school, even if school was not actually in session, said April Beasley, the district's data analysis coordinator.

Also, she added, Google provides tighter security protocols for Google Apps for Education, and advertisements will be turned off.

Hayley Greene, the district's public relations and marketing strategist, said Google Apps creates a virtual 24/7 classroom for students and teachers. Not only would students be able to work on the same document at the same time, high school students in the same grade at two different schools can work on the same document.

"Some of our children have lost their communication skills because all of their communication is done through Facebook, through the Internet, basically," said April Beasley, the district’s data analysis coordinator.

"This is a tool. This is not replacing the computer lab and comes into the classroom," she said. "So I just wanted the parents to know that technology spreads across the Bulloch County system, Beasley said, "the district's director of curriculum and instruction, said a 20-member committee of principals, teachers and information systems engineers brainstormed on the potential of using Google Apps for Bulloch County Education, the district purchased 160 Chromebook laptop computers — 100 for William James and 60 for Julia P. — using $50,000 in grant funding. And at Langston Chapel Elementary, Michelle Rivera, a Google-certified instructional technology teacher, runs the school's computer lab and came from Georgia Southern University's College of Education. Faculty and staff at the three schools will be trained beginning Sept. 23. Once it has been fully implemented, the district will monitor how it performs and make any needed adjustments before spreading it to the rest of the school system.

"There will be constant review and revision of the procedures," Phillips said. "The committee's going to have to meet frequently to talk about: 'Where are we with this work? Are there any permutations that need to be changed? Do we need to tighten up security in other places?'

Georgia Southern uses Google Apps for its students, faculty and staff. As that technology spreads across the Bulloch County school system, Beasley said, "there might be opportunities for Bulloch County students to collaborate on projects with Georgia Southern students — or even the Georgia Institute of Technology or other higher education institutions — using Google Apps for Education."

Jason Warner may be reached at (912) 489-0491.

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State brief

The Associated Press

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