

Gann Academy FirstClass Messaging Standards, Expectations, and Other Information 2009-2010

Introduction

Messaging in a web-rich world is vital to good communication and student learning. Faculty, staff, and students, are provided with FirstClass accounts. Parents have a shared space with access to school wide information and news. The FirstClass Collaboration Suite is an integrated suite of applications designed to enhance communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing within our school environment. FirstClass takes communication capabilities beyond standard email by integrating a set of features and applications for online collaboration, learning, content sharing and publishing. Gann's FirstClass Collaboration Suite includes the following integrated components:

- The FirstClass Desktop
- Email and Instant Messaging
- Collaborative Conferences & Workspaces
- Calendars
- Contact Management
- Web 2.0 tools: Personal Web Publishing, Blogs, Podcasting, and others
- Personal File Storage
- Email Archiving
- Email synchronization
- Rapid Web Designer
- MassMailer
- Integrated Barracuda Spam Filter

FirstClass Tutorials can be found at <http://www.gannacademy.org/teaching/FirstClass.asp>.

Our school understands the importance of both well-worded messages and prompt replies in portraying a professional and educated image. Users are expected to exercise good judgment in writing and forwarding messages, as well as when using attachments and web tools. All Gann users should adhere to the following guidelines when using email.

Composing and Sending Messages

Email is considered formal communication, unlike text messaging, chat, and other messaging tools. Users should review the content of email communications prior to transmission to make sure that the message is well structured, clear, has an appropriate subject line, and does not include information or wording that could be misinterpreted by the recipient.

Subject Lines

Appropriate subject lines are necessary to reduce the chances that a recipient's mail server will erroneously tag your message as spam. This also enables the recipient, as well as the sender, to locate messages more quickly.

Use a short and descriptive subject line to summarize the content of the message that will enable recipients to interpret and prioritize the message quickly.

Spell Checking and Formatting

Messages should be checked for spelling, grammar, and punctuation before they are sent.

Use of proper case appropriate to formal written communications is necessary. Messages should never be written in all capital letters as this is more difficult to read and may be interpreted as shouting or yelling.

Care should also be taken to use fonts, colors, and sizes that allow for easy reading.

Block paragraph style is standard for email.

Use of smileys and other emoticon are encouraged to better communicate by adding emotional context to your messages.

Signature

It is expected that all employees will use a standard block signature format as such:

Message text.....

_____ (line separation)

Mary Smith (full name)
Science Department Chair (title or role)

Gann Academy-The New Jewish High School of Greater Boston
333 Forest Street
Waltham, MA 02452

Website: <http://www.gannacademy.org>
Telephone: 781.642.6800 x 000 (extension)
Fax: 781.642.6805
email: msmith@gannacademy.org

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE

The information contained in this e-mail message and any attachments hereto is privileged and confidential, and is intended only for the use of the recipient and others who have been specifically authorized to receive it.

Edit and Unsend

FirstClass messages can be unsend, edited, and resent. The use of the *unsend* function is preferable to sending multiple emails with revisions. Mail to outside Internet addresses cannot be unsend.

Some conferences may be established without permission to unsend or delete messages.

Read and Respond Message Expectations

Emails must be read periodically during the course of the day to receive announcements and to be prepared for events, updates, and changes to the schedule. Failure to read one's messages is not an acceptable excuse for missing official school communications.

Users are responsible for time-sensitive communications; messages must be answered in a timely manner.

Message Retention, Retrieval, History

Messages in personal mailboxes will automatically be deleted after 90 days. If a user has sufficient reason to keep an email, the message should be moved to a folder or marked to never expire.

Conference messages by default will automatically expire after 45 days. However, some conferences may have different expiration dates. Expiration dates for conferences can be checked by viewing the conference permissions.

Only conference creators, monitors, senders in most cases, or those with explicit permission may delete messages from a conference folder before its expiration.

Deleted messages can be undeleted before 3:00AM on the following day. After that time it is irretrievable except through special arrangement to retrieve from archive.

The history of a message can be checked to see when it has been read and what other actions have been taken (e.g. forward, reply, etc.). This is especially helpful for communications where time is a factor, such as turning in a class assignment.

User Accounts

A user account consists of a username and password combination. Passwords are assigned and cannot be changed by the user. Passwords can not be saved in our FirstClass configuration.

In the wrong hands, user account information could lead to identity theft or user impersonation (e.g. falsified emails). To that end, it is expected that Gann users will not disclose password information to anyone or keep account information in an accessible location.

If it is believed that an account's information has been compromised the HelpDesk should be notified immediately.

Privacy

Privacy of personal information is a reasonable expectation, and the school makes every effort to provide for this through policies and system security strategies. *The expectation of privacy, however, should never be assumed as it cannot be guaranteed.* Occasions may arise in which other factors have a clear priority over a user's personal privacy, such as the diagnosis and resolution of hardware or software problems, issues related to user conduct, as well as the school's compliance with State and Federal disclosure laws¹.

FirstClass Desktop and Containers

Each user's FirstClass desktop contains only items specifically relevant to that user's role at Gann; therefore, all desktops are different. FirstClass desktops can be customized by the user.

¹ As authorized by the Electronic and Communications Privacy Act of 1989, Title 18, United States Code 2510. Information sent from, received on, or stored on Gann Academy's computers or network system is the property of Gann Academy. The school will, with proper concern for the right of privacy, have the authority to view the contents of these files or programs in the course of investigating and/or diagnosing problems or difficulties of any type.

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A FirstClass container is used to store or send messages within the Gann Academy intranet. A container can be a conference, mailbox, folder, workgroup, or calendar. Each container that displays a red flag indicates that it contains one or more unread messages. Containers displaying a red flag should be checked for new messages.

FirstClass Conferences

Conferences are used to send messages and other items to a predefined group of recipients within the school community. The fact that conferences are accessible by many users implies that they are not confidential within that user group. *Duplicate messages should not be sent to several conferences with the same readership.* This practice only overwhelms readers and actually decreases the value of the message and the likelihood that it will be read.

- A FirstClass *Mailbox* contains messages sent directly to an individual user.
- The *Gann Academy News* conference contains messages relevant to the entire community (faculty, staff, parents, and students). This conference also houses the school calendar, daily announcements, and access to other important information and resources. All staff and students with approval can send messages to Gann Academy News.
- The *Employee Lounge* contains messages sent to and from staff members (no students).
- Messages sent to and from faculty are stored in the *Faculty Lounge* (no students).
- The *Student Lounge* contains messages sent by students to students'. No official school communications. (Monitored only).
- Student *class conferences* contain messages to students from students in the same grade. No official school communications. (Monitored only).
- Parents can access the password protected *Parent Area* conference via the web or FirstClass client. This is largely a read only area containing a repository of all information sent to parents, as well as a number of interactive areas there parents can send using their personal email addresses. Generally, parents do not have personal FirstClass accounts.

Additional conferences are set up for particular groups in the school, such as academic departments and leadership teams, student clubs, sports teams, etc. All student conferences are monitored by a faculty member. Students do not have permission to create conferences.

Faculty will create their own FirstClass conferences for their classes. They will determine what and how conference resources will be used in their classes and will specify their requirements in their course syllabus. For instance, they may limit the ability to delete or edit time-specific assignments.

Bulk Mail

Gann employs special software and has specific procedures in place for sending bulk email. These, as well as external email lists, are restricted to ensure compliance with bulk email standards, to protect Gann's Internet address from being blacklisted, as well as to insure that adequate content authorization is maintained in school communications. All large mailings should be made by either the receptionist (for parent mail) or the Development Office (for alumni). Internally, FirstClass conferences should always be used instead of large mail lists.

Attachments

Attachments to email messages are one way to share files with others. Documents can also be uploaded into FirstClass without having to be attached to an email.

Email attachments can be a means of propagating viruses or other damaging files thus infecting the recipient's computer and possibly the network to which that computer is connected.

Inbound and outbound mail attachments are scanned for viruses and infected files are blocked. Some specific file types are also prohibited from inbound mail. Examples ".zip" and ".exe" attachments are not allowed.

What is *Attach0.html*? FirstClass mail service is configured to accept both plain text and HTML mail. By default and for security reasons, all mail is received in plain text, but the HTML mail version can be read by opening the attachment called *Attach0.html* once it has been determined that the message is safe.

Email Archiving

FirstClass messages, including chats, are archived for all users including students, full-time, temporary, and part-time employees and interns of the school.

In order to better manage the system's large volume of messages, to reduce the amount of server storage space used by email, to enhance the school's email backup, and to comply with e-discovery mandates when legally required, the school employs a FirstClass Archive server to automatically archiving messages to and from the system.

The use of an archive system does not change the basic tenets of the school messaging policy in regards to security and privacy. Request to search and retrieve archived messages must be initiated by a message to the HelpDesk office. Review of the request and permission to perform such search may be needed depending on the nature of the request.

Message retention periods are:

Employees - 7 years

Incoming 9th grade students - 4 years

Incoming and current 10th graders - 3 years

Incoming and current 11th graders - 2 years

Incoming and current 12th graders - 1 year

Unauthorized Activity

It is strictly prohibited to:

- send or forward messages containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks or images.²
- forward or copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without first acquiring permission from the message's originator.
- send unsolicited email messages or chain mail.
- forge or attempt to forge messages, or disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending messages.
- send messages using another person's FirstClass account.
- publish others' email addresses by listing all recipients in the send or cc field (instead, use the BCC field to send to multiple addresses).

² If you receive an email of this nature you must promptly notify your department head, advisor, or teacher.

Account Maintenance, Advice, and Other Information

Follow the steps below to ensure that all mailboxes and machines are clean and safe.

1. Delete all unneeded email messages. Regardless of space allowances, FC flagable³ items are limited and, if exceeded, more messages cannot be delivered.
2. Specifically save those messages that should not be deleted. Once trash collection happens at 3:00 AM each day a message is irretrievable.
3. Faculty should follow all the instructions provided in the “How to Guides” in the Faculty Lounge so as to avoid loss of data in conferences and to ensure that users can access your class materials.
4. Faculty must unsubscribe users first before deleting class conferences that are no longer valid.
5. Check and categorize messages in your Barracuda area regularly to avoid missing timely “good” mail.
6. Keep your personal machine updated with the latest operating system security and critical updates. <http://www.windowsupdate.com> (or other computer system similar resources).
7. Keep your FirstClass client updated with the latest version for security and the benefit of added features. Check <http://www.firstclass.com/clientdownloads/> for version updates. Always update when notified to do so.
8. Check for hoax information before opening and/or resending any questionable mail or attachments. <http://www.sophos.com/security/>, <http://securityresponse.symantec.com/>
9. Check for virus threats, removal tools, updates, definitions, on your personal machine. This is automated for school machines through the Sophos anti-virus client. Updated anti-virus is required for personal devices connecting to the school network. <http://www.sophos.com/security/>, <http://securityresponse.symantec.com/>

Understand Malware

Malware is any intrusive control program put on a computer with or without the user’s knowledge. Malware includes spyware, adware, backdoor Trojans and keystroke loggers. One of the programs' purposes is to make a computer a “zombie” – a computer under the control of a hacker. The infected system may be used to send spam, host a pornography site, or, with key-logging programs, steal personal information. Anything typed – identity, credit cards, passwords, and other important information – can be captured by such programs.

Avoid installing unknown software on your personal computers and on Gann laptops. Beware of free software.

The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), school rules, user policies, school machine configurations, software, and other devices are efforts to protect the school’s systems and users’ data against these vulnerabilities.

³ Flagable items are messages, calendar entries, and other FirstClass items that can be marked with a red flag.

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Unsafe Messages Links

Links to web sites and images within a message may contain malicious computer code that is dangerous to Gann's network and user data, and can result in a loss of privacy.

Barracuda and FirstClass help manage this by blocking potentially bad messages based on a scoring system and by not allowing html messages to automatically open before the sender's legitimacy can be verified. For this reason, a generic marker for mail with images and other potentially unsafe links is used.

Protection from such vulnerabilities is more difficult with web-based mail, chat, popups and bad web pages. Gann uses a combination of policy, software, hardware and other to thwart these potential threats.

FirstClass will automatically generate an attachment called *Attach0.html* where potentially unsafe html messages can be viewed after their legitimacy has been determined.

Spam Filter

Gann Academy uses a Barracuda Networks spam filter. Every Gann account has a personal Barracuda quarantine account. This account will inadvertently "catch" some good mail as well as spam. No spam filter will catch all spam.

Messages received in quarantine must be addressed in a timely manner. It is very important that the user classify the sender message as spam or not spam. Messages classified as not spam will be delivered to the users FirstClass mailbox.

Users will receive an automated quarantine account message with account access information. The user ID is the full email address, i.e. msmith@gannacademy.org. The password is automatically generated and can be changed in the users' Barracuda account preferences. Subsequently, users will receive regular quarantine message summary when new quarantine messages exist.

Support

Questions regarding Gann software, hardware, access and other technical issues must be sent via email to the (HelpDesk@gannacademy.org). If the problem prohibits email, call extension 210.