

# Garden Valley School Division

Students and teachers at the school use Vibe to sharpen their communication and collaboration skills in a safe online environment.



## Overview

Garden Valley School Division (GVSD) educates more than 4,300 K–12 students and employs 600 educators and administrators across 12 facilities throughout south central Manitoba, just outside the capital city of Winnipeg. GVSD has an annual growth rate of approximately 300 students per year.

## Challenge

GVSD built its reputation of superior education by offering a wide range of high-quality programs and services to prepare students to eventually compete in a fast-paced job market. Yet its lapse in technology innovation left many teachers and administrators feeling they weren't adequately preparing students for a world increasingly run online—thus breaching

the ethics instilled within the foundation of GVSD's mission. GVSD needed to find a way to help teachers keep up with students and innovate in their classrooms in a quick, efficient, and effective manner—especially on the social media side.

"We realized that students' adoption of the latest and greatest technologies was far outpacing our adoption of these tools to further the educational process," said James Reimer, IT manager for Garden Valley School Division. Reimer continued, "The fragmentation between students and teachers was becoming apparent, sending up a huge red flag to a school IT system that always embraced open collaboration. Unfortunately, administrators knew that with the playing field becoming increasingly unequal, it would only be a matter of time before the overall performance of the students, teachers, and school system as a whole suffered."

## Solution

GVSD turned to OpenText™ Vibe to help close this technology gap. The district began using Vibe as a teaching tool with several goals in mind. First and foremost, GVSD wanted students to be the predominant users; therefore, it needed a solution that had a user-friendly social media interface. It wasn't long before

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### JAMES REIMER

IT Manager  
Garden Valley School Division

## At a Glance

### ■ Industry

Education

### ■ Location

Manitoba, Canada

### ■ Challenge

The educational process was suffering because the school wasn't keeping pace with the student body's adoption of emerging technologies.

### ■ Products and Services

Vibe

### ■ Success Highlights

- + Revolutionized how teachers collaborate with students and correspond with colleagues
- + Reduced the risk of cyber bullying via online safety courses and ethical-use-of-technology discussions
- + Sharpened student writing and social media skills
- + Gave students a way to make their voices heard, and a way for teachers too ask for instant feedback

**“For students, they’re able to sharpen their writing and social media skills while also being able to relate to their teachers and fellow students on a closer level.”**

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students caught onto the social side of Vibe. For example, they were able to learn about blogging and improve their writing through practice with the solution's secure microblogging tool. Additionally, Vibe provided a secure environment for students with a robust selection of tools, allowing GVSD to ensure students are safe online.

Given its size and extensive network of education professionals, GVSD also wanted to establish a professional learning community among the teachers within each school while also fostering cross-collaboration among the units. The goal was to provide forums for teachers to correspond openly about curriculum questions and specific learning techniques. Using Vibe, GVSD took what was once a siloed and spread-out organization and created an active community of teachers collaborating on all things classroom-related.

## Results

In the first year, more than 500 active students and educators used Vibe. GVSD then expanded the system to all 4,300 students and 600 staff. “Teachers really enjoy it and see a lot of potential in it revolutionizing how they conduct their classroom affairs, correspond with their colleagues, and collaborate with students. For students, they’re able to sharpen their writing

and social media skills, while also being able to relate to their teachers and fellow students on a closer level,” said Reimer.

Additionally, the risk of cyber bullying has decreased as teachers have used Vibe to run specific online safety courses, discuss ethical uses of technology, and exemplify the advantages and dangers of having an online presence. Another overall benefit for GVSD is in its ability to link each teacher and student quickly and easily. With such a large campus, students have the ability to make their own voice heard, while teachers can ask for advice and receive feedback almost instantly. In an effort to further extend collaboration, GVSD also looks to leverage full integration between Vibe and OpenText™ GroupWise in the near future.

“Our teachers are extremely busy and don't want to log into multiple sites, so this integration will enable them to automatically sign-in to their email account while also having access to all Vibe folders,” continued Reimer. “The more integrated we can be, the easier it will be to have full access within a few clicks, and the faster teachers will adopt and advocate for the solution.”

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