Google for Education

Lee County Schools personalizes learning using Google Apps for Education, Google Classroom and Chromebooks

What they wanted to do
- Shift from paper-based to digital education
- Provide teachers with tools to incorporate visual and audio content in the classroom

What they did
- Introduced Google Apps for Education and Google Classroom
- Rolled out 18,000 Chromebooks in the middle schools

What they accomplished
- Allowed teachers to personalize lesson plans based on students' learning styles
- Improved student-student collaboration regardless of location
- Encouraged students to interact with teachers more
- Provided teachers insight into how students work

"Google Apps for Education changes how teachers teach because they can quickly identify when students are struggling and customize content accordingly."
—Dwayne Alton, director of IT support , School District of Lee County

Background
Located on the southwest coast of Florida, the School District of Lee County educates 94,000 students and employs 12,000 staff. The district's 120 schools include 44 elementary schools, 16 middle schools, 13 high schools and several special education schools and charter schools. The district's mission is to encourage each student to reach his or her full potential.

Challenge
The state of Florida is at the cutting edge of digital learning, and recent state mandates encourage schools to shift from paper-based to digital education. The School District of Lee County needed to provide students with technology that enables them to access digital textbooks, complete their assignments digitally and conduct online research. They also wanted to provide teachers with tools to use videos, interactive activities and shared documents in their lesson plans. The biggest challenge was finding a solution that achieved these goals using the district's same budget and resources.

Solution
The School District of Lee County soft launched Google Apps for Education districtwide two years ago when staff needed an easier way to share files across devices. Teachers had the option to use the tools, but it wasn't required. One year later, they formally piloted Google Apps and 2,000 Chromebooks. Today, the entire district uses Google Apps and Google Classroom, and the middle schools rolled out 18,000 Chromebooks. Teachers who previously used Google Apps served as mentors for others, sharing best practices they learned during the pilot. The district introduced these three technologies without additional budget or technical support.

Benefits
Customized teaching and learning
With Google Classroom, teachers can personalize visual, audio and text resources based on students' distinct learning styles. For example, a history teacher uses Google Earth to take students on a virtual tour of buildings they're studying, catering to visual learners. If one student needs help with one lesson covered in a video and another student would benefit from a different lesson of the video, the teacher can designate different segments for the students to watch. With a more streamlined workflow, teachers can spend more time customizing content for each student and providing more one-on-one instruction.

Digital learning also helps students of all learning styles share their opinions and ideas. "It's amazing the type of work students who would never ask a question or give a presentation in class turn in online," says Dwayne Alton, director of IT support at The School District of Lee County. "They come out of their shell when they do assignment digitally, breaking down the barriers of the classroom."

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A solution built for learning and designed for the classroom that includes easy-to-manage, affordable devices like Chromebooks, productivity tools like Google Apps for Education with Classroom, and limitless educational content in Google Play for Education. Together these tools help teachers inspire curiosity, while students learn better together, wherever they are.

For more information visit:
www.google.com/edu
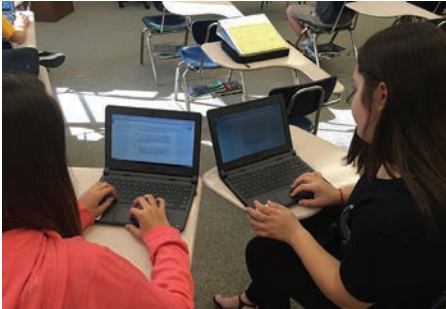
Real-time student collaboration

Google Apps and Chromebooks help students learn research skills from each other. Students collaborate, edit their peers' work using the suggestion mode, and add comments to Google Docs and Sheets. For example, fourth graders in a science class shared measurements from an experiment in a spreadsheet and created graphs based on each other's research. Students can also work on projects together when they aren't sitting in the same room.

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Enhanced feedback loop

With Google Classroom, the grading and feedback process is no longer a one-way channel. Teachers add comments, and students respond to feedback and ask questions as they write. This two-way communication encourages students to seek help from teachers more often, and to view teachers as trusted resources. Students and teachers can communicate wherever they are using Chromebooks, and teachers can respond in an instant, whether they're on a laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Teachers check the status of assignments and see how they develop as students work. With this level of transparency, teachers address areas of improvement as learning happens, and are able to more quickly help students improve their understanding of a concept or mastery of a skill.

Teachers also create quizzes that are automatically graded using Google Forms and the Flubaroo add-on. By cutting out the grading process, teachers can provide feedback more efficiently. "Google Apps changes how teachers teach because they can quickly identify when students are struggling and customize content accordingly," Alton says. "Now teachers can communicate with students easily, test their understanding and react to the results in a timely manner."

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