

Chicago Public Schools makes learning more interactive using Google Apps for Education



What they wanted to do

- Consolidate to one cloud-based email system
- Provide a better way for students and teachers to collaborate

What they did

- Rolled out Google Apps for Education to 330,000 students and teachers combined
- Introduced Google Classroom

What they accomplished

- Created more interactive, engaging lesson plans
- Taught students how to collaborate and think critically using technology
- Shifted the organizational culture to be more collaborative



Background

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) educates approximately 400,000 students and employs more than 40,000 staff, making it the third largest school district in the country. The district includes 484 elementary schools and 176 high schools. Its mission is to provide every child from every community in Chicago with access to a high-quality education; providing students with skills to think critically, innovate and promote change in their communities.

Challenge

CPS had two email systems — one for students, and one for teachers — and the Information Technology Services team spent lots of time and resource managing the separate systems. The schools wanted to consolidate to one cloud-based email system for students and teachers. CPS also wanted a better way for students and teachers to collaborate.

Solution

The schools adopted Gmail as the district-wide email system and introduced Google Apps for Education in September 2012. The district could easily manage the 330,000 accounts and didn't have to worry about running out of storage space since email and documents are stored in the cloud. To date, the schools have 26 million files saved in Google Drive. CPS introduced Google Classroom at the start of the 2015-2016 school year.

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—Margaret Hahn, director of technology change management

Benefits

Innovative learning

Teachers at CPS are using Google Hangouts and Draw to make learning more interactive and engaging. For example, students in a history class connected with students in North Carolina via Hangouts and participated in a debate on the Civil War. Also, teachers use Google Draw to cater to different learning styles. "Some students might be more artistic and prefer to draw their answer, rather than write a paragraph, so teachers let students show their concept in a drawing instead of words," says Margaret Hahn, director of technology change management. These innovative activities encourage students to interact with technology in a new way, collaborate virtually and cater their learning to their personal preferences.

Teaching skills of tomorrow

One of CPS's goals is to provide students with 21st century skills. By providing real-time feedback to students, teachers are training students to receive

Google for Education

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.

constructive feedback that they need to be successful in college and careers. Students collaborate with their classmates and provide peer feedback, teaching them teamwork. “We’re teaching students that it’s not just their work — it’s a team effort,” says Hahn. “Students are thinking beyond the classroom, becoming comfortable with using technology and developing critical thinking skills.”

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Cultural shift

Introducing Google Apps for Education encouraged CPS to shift its organizational culture. Says Hahn: “By using Google Apps for Education, our district has strengthened our culture and mission around collaboration, open communication and transparency.” At CPS, the average Google Doc is shared with eight people. The No. 1 reason most teachers use Google Apps for Education is to collaborate and share resources such as lesson plans and homework assignments.

The global classroom

Students at CPS travel to Spain, experience the surface of Mars and see the ocean for the first time through [Google Expeditions Pioneer Program](#), a virtual reality experience that takes students on far-flung field trips while staying in the classroom. CPS wanted to provide all students with the opportunity to “travel” new places. At Azuela Elementary School, students toured the Great Wall of China and calculated distances based on the wall’s measurements.

