Google for Education

Massapequa Public Schools encourages students and teachers to think differently about learning with Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks

MASSAPEQUA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What they wanted to do
- Introduce content creation and collaboration tools
- Provide students and staff with unlimited document storage

What they did
- Introduced Google Apps for Education in 2011
- Rolled out Chromebooks districtwide

What they accomplished
- Provided students with the ability to receive peer and teacher feedback
- Extended learning beyond the classroom
- Empowered teachers to create learning resources for students to access from anywhere
- Encouraged real-time collaboration

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—*Ed Kemnitzer, executive assistant for technology integration of curriculum support and development, Massapequa Public Schools*

Background
The **Massapequa Public Schools** district is situated on the South Shore of Long Island. More than 7,200 students attend its six elementary, one middle and two high schools. Massapequa Public Schools' mission is to empower students through the effective and efficient use of ubiquitous technology.

Challenge
The district wanted to introduce content creation tools with rich collaboration features, so that teachers could provide real-time feedback and students could work on group projects from different locations. Students and teachers were also always running out of storage, so Massapequa Public Schools prioritized choosing a solution with unlimited storage.

Solution
Massapequa Public Schools introduced Google Apps for Education in 2011. The district rolled out the tools slowly, starting with a small group of tech-savvy teachers. Now, all students and staff use Google Apps for Education every day.

Massapequa Public Schools chose Chromebooks for their affordability, quick bootup time and seamless integration with Google Apps for Education. The district already used over 1,000 Chromebooks following a cart model. In January 2015, the district rolled out 1,500 additional Chromebooks to start their "Learning...Anytime, Anywhere" 1:1 program in its middle school.

"We regularly tell students it doesn't matter where you are, you should be able to get to your assignments and resources — whether you're at home, in the library, on vacation, or at Starbucks with a friend," says Bob Schilling, executive director for assessment, student data and technology services at Massapequa Public Schools. "Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education exemplify that 'anytime, anywhere' learning."

Benefits
360-degree feedback
At Massapequa Public Schools, learning used to be an individual activity. Now, students create Google Docs and share their work with peers for their input. Students are learning how to evaluate each other's work and how to incorporate different types of feedback. Teachers can provide more personalized instruction by leaving comments throughout the content creation process. "Reading, analyzing and writing poetry can be a pretty mundane activity for some. But when our teachers take that activity, turn it into a building-wide Poetry Slam where students comment on each others' work, you've made it real. Not only are students creating and publishing, they're learning how to analyze and critique in a supportive environment supervised by the teacher," notes Schilling.

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Learning resources available all the time

Teachers at Massapequa Public Schools are starting to think differently about how they teach and make sure resources are available beyond the classroom. For example, math teachers who are teaching Pythagorean theorem can lecture $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ on the whiteboard, but they also can create instructional videos for students to reference from home. When students open their homework assignments and need a refresher on the theorem, they can simply watch the video and teach themselves at home. Says Schilling: "Students watch videos or access resources provided by their teacher at home in order to be introduced to concepts, then spend class time applying those concepts in authentic experiences. That changes the value of a 40-minute class period."

Real-time collaboration

When students are sick or simply at home on a typical evening, they can still participate in group projects. For instance, Schilling shared a story of students in a health class working on group presentations during class time. One member of a group was at home with a fever, but that didn't stop her from participating. She opened the Google Presentation from home, and the team used the collaborative features to continue their work together in real-time, even though they were miles apart.

"We typically think of a classroom as having four walls," Kemnitzer says. "Now our teachers are understanding that the classroom extends beyond the confines of the school building."

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Invisible technology

Chromebooks boot up quickly and students can be up and running in 10 seconds, so less class time is spent managing technology, and more time is used for learning. "In the past, PCs and laptops with specific software applications were the norm. We used to need to wait for them to boot up, make sure they had the right software, call a technician to install it if it didn't and make sure everything was updated. So much of the students' time and effort went into making sure the tool was ready. With Chromebooks, you don't have to think about the actual device you're using, and you can truly move forward with instruction," Schilling says. "The tools just disappear."