Google for Education

Canberra Public Schools empower students to "Learn, Anywhere" with Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks

At a Glance

What they wanted to do
- Replace aging, slow laptops and desktop computers
- Provide access to real-world learning platforms so students can learn, create, communicate, and collaborate from anywhere
- Help students be more engaged in learning

What they did
- Conducted a pilot test using Chromebooks
- Transitioned to Google Apps across the district in 2015
- Upgraded the wireless networks in schools (with over 2,500 access points)
- Released a BYOD policy to enable students to bring their own devices to school

What they achieved
- Distributed 4,500 Chromebooks (and counting) to Canberra classrooms
- Provided 32,000 students with Google Apps for Education accounts
- Empowered students to take a more active role in their own learning
- Improved learning inside and outside the classroom

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—Dan Bray, ACT Program Manager

Background
The Australian Capital Territory Education Directorate ("Canberra Public Schools") launched a districtwide digital schools program with the goal of empowering students to "Learn, Anywhere", forming part of a broader government strategy to establish Canberra as a leading digital city. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Education Directorate serves 45,000 students preschool through year 12 in the 87 schools comprising the Canberra Public Schools system and is committed to providing all students with technology for learning 21st-century skills.

Challenge
To provide a strong technology infrastructure to support improved learning across the district, the Directorate connected all Canberra Public Schools into one centralised network using broadband internet access. But their learning management system was difficult to use and did not scale to mobile devices, and many of the schools' laptops were obsolete. Students were frustrated with slow login times and had limited access to learning materials outside the classroom. "We needed a device that could log in very quickly and provide a rich learning experience in school, at home, or anywhere else students needed access," says Dan Bray, Program Manager, eLearning, ACT Education Directorate.

Solution
"Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education were the logical choice for us," Bray says. In 2014, the Directorate ran a pilot test with 208 Chromebooks and Google Apps in four primary and secondary schools. Chromebooks were affordable and in sync with the district's wireless system, and Google Apps were easy for teachers and students to use. The pilot was a success, with students, parents, and teachers welcoming the

world of learning opportunities Google tools provided in a reliable, safe, secure environment. Since 2015, they have rolled out Google Apps accounts for all teachers and 32,000 students, Chromebooks are at 4,500 and counting across the district. Says Bray, "Chromebooks and Google Apps have really helped on our journey to realising our 'Learn, Anywhere' vision."

Benefits

Rethinking teaching and learning

Accessible online from any device, Google Apps lets students work in the classroom, at home, or anywhere they choose to learn. Says year 10 Amaroo School student Sophie, "Having a universal platform is awesome, because all of your work is in one place and you don't worry about losing your work."

Rather than working on lessons individually and waiting for teachers to correct their work, students now learn together and track their progress using Google Docs and Sheets, giving and receiving feedback in real time. "We did a pre-test quiz in maths and we could see our levels," says Sophie. "We all talked about the things we needed to work on and decided as a class where we needed to improve."

Google Classroom has enabled teachers to quickly see who has or hasn't completed work, provide direct feedback at the time it's most needed and grades to students without printing a single piece of paper. And parents can now take a more active role in their children's learning. "Learning doesn't just happen between 9 am and 3 pm," says Macquarie Primary School teacher Samantha Wansink. "Google tools 'open up the classroom doors' so families are able to contribute examples of the learning which they participate in with their children."

Streamlining tools for learning

The Directorate created a "Digital Backpack" for teachers and students, with Google Classroom and Google Apps available in one dashboard. Students receive a single login and password for their Google accounts, which stays with them from primary through secondary school. These student learning portfolios grow year to year, so families can track student development and celebrate achievements. Teachers can take a richer, more holistic view of student work and progress as well as easily add students into their classrooms.

About Chromebooks for Education

Chromebooks for Education give students, teachers, and administrators a simple solution for fast, intuitive, and easy-to-manage computing.

Chromebooks provide access to the web's education and collaboration resources, as well as offer centralised management and low total cost of ownership.

Using Chromebooks, teachers spend more time teaching and less time managing classroom technology, and schools can deploy more computers into the hands of their students and teachers.

To learn more about Chromebooks for Education, visit:
google.com.au/edu/products/devices/

About Google Apps for Education

Google Apps for Education is a suite of communication and collaboration tools offered to schools for free and without ads.

Google Apps for Education can be accessed from any device, at any time. Products in the suite include Gmail, Calendar, Drive, and Classroom.

Google Classroom lets teachers easily create, review, and organise assignments, as well as communicate directly with their students.

To learn more about
Google Apps for Education, visit
www.google.com.au/edu/

Empowering students to create change

Amaroo School leaders asked students what they needed to create a technology-rich and innovative learning environment. Student input not only informed the school's information and communication technology (ICT) plan but guided the Directorate's implementation of the Google Apps for Education platform. This empowered students to form a group called ASTEC—Amaroo School Technical Experience Crew. They provide peer tech support, using Google forms for students to log requests and Google groups to bounce solutions off each other. "We get hands-on experience in something we wouldn't have been able to do before Google Apps," says ASTEC member Sophie. "It's like work experience, but at our school."

Results

By adopting Chromebooks and Google Apps districtwide, the ACT Education Directorate has provided greater opportunities for students to share ideas, give peer feedback, and collaborate with each other, in real time. "Chromebooks and Google Apps have helped us simplify technology, 'uncomplicating' it as much as possible so our teachers can focus on what is most important—quality learning for every student, every day," Bray says.

Students across the district are more engaged at all grade levels. Macgregor Primary School teacher Renee Waters shares one example: "Brayden was a reluctant writer who didn't enjoy the process of handwriting. He would often take three 45-minute lessons to complete a couple of sentences. With the introduction of Google Docs and the process of immediate feedback, along with the support of Chromebooks and access to apps such as Read&Write, Brayden successfully produced a well-structured exposition in just one 45-minute lesson."

"Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education are empowering students to be at the centre of their learning," Wansink says. "Now, students can spread their wings as courageous, connected, and critical learners."