

Tablets with Google Play for Education Help Hillsborough Township Public Schools Transform Classroom Learning



About Hillsborough Township Public Schools (HTPS)

- <http://www.htps.us/>
- Somerset County, New Jersey
- 7,350 students

Goals

- Provide up-to-date technology to students to aid learning

Approach

- Provided students at Elementary level with a Google Nexus Tablet, to use content from Google Play for Education and access Google Apps for Education

Results

- Created an engaging and more enjoyable learning environment
- Offered a more personalized approach to learning for individual students through Google Play for Education apps
- Introduced technology as means to learning, rather than as an end in itself



About Hillsborough

Hillsborough Township Public Schools (HTPS) is a comprehensive community public school district in Somerset County, New Jersey. It includes nine schools, and educates over 7,350 students of all ages from across the region. The District is committed to providing a superior education for all its students, to build their passion for learning and prepare them for their future careers.

Challenge

The HTPS management team firmly believes that the way technology is used in schools plays a crucial role in the development of students. The team doesn't view technology as a subject in itself, but as a means to help students learn across academic areas. As part of this approach, the school district wanted to introduce tablets to elementary classrooms.

"Technology moves at such a fast pace now that it is impossible to imagine what devices will be available to our students in their working lives. To give them a head-start, we want to make sure they are familiar with using technology for learning from a young age," explains Director of IT, Joel T. Handler.

Although they reviewed various tablets, HTPS struggled to find a device that matched its criteria of being effective, robust and easy to use and administer.

Handler says, "With other tablets, apps are stored on the devices themselves. If you hand them out in class you have to make sure that each one is manually pre-loaded with the apps you want the students to use. This could take our IT team several hours a week."

Solution

When Google made tablets with Google Play for Education available to a number of schools in the market HTPS was eager to try it. The solution also offered access to a range of educational apps through Google Play for Education, a special view of Google Play for schools in the program. Google Play for Education is an online destination where schools can find educational apps, videos, and books browsable by subject, grade, or standard. Google Play for Education offers schools bulk payment (through purchase order or credit card) and allows educators to deploy apps instantly via the cloud to groups of students with just a few clicks. This means teachers can manage the distribution of apps themselves through a central management console, without the IT team's involvement. Finally, this solution provided quick access to Google Apps for Education, the online communication and collaboration suite which includes Gmail, Calendar, Sites and Docs.

The roll out of 3,000 Nexus 7 tablets to teachers and students from grades Kindergarten to four was quick and easy. From when the tablet was removed from its packaging, HTPS found that it only took a matter of seconds to set each tablet up, and even less time to download the apps.

"Introducing new technologies mid-way through the academic year can be a challenge, but because Nexus 7 is so quick and easy to set up, the process didn't give our IT team a single headache," adds Handler.



"I've found plenty of uses for the apps from Google Play for Education in my classes....It's great because the children become so engaged in the learning experience that they don't even realize they're learning. This means they're more motivated to learn."

—Renee Meyers, third grade teacher, Triangle Elementary

Benefits

Ease of Use

The schools deliberately took a simple approach to introducing the tablets, offering basic training and then leaving it to teachers to decide how best to use them. This strategy was highly effective as the touchscreen interface of Nexus 7 tablets made them intuitive to use, even for younger students.



Use of diverse apps

Since HTPS started using Nexus 7 tablets, they have downloaded over hundreds of different apps from Google Play for Education, with students using them across a range of subjects.

Third grade teacher, Renee Meyers, from HTPS's Triangle Elementary, explains, "I've found plenty of uses for the apps from Google Play for Education in my classes. The children love Wordsplosion for spelling and the thesaurus and dictionary apps help with literacy. I've also found an app that gives a haiku a day to help with their poetry writing. For science, we use the tablet to look up rocks and minerals and in math the multiplication apps are a real help. It's great because the children become so engaged in the learning experience that they don't even realize they're learning. This means they're more engaged and motivated."



Teachers can search Google Play for Education by subject for relevant resources. In geography, for instance, teachers have started using Google Earth, which enables them to bring to life a particular geographic region, by visiting it virtually. Art lessons have also been invigorated with the use of the tablet to find famous paintings for inspiration. Previously, there was a limited supply of art textbooks so this new library of visual references has been gratefully received.



About tablets with Google Play for Education

Introducing tablets with Google Play for Education, the easy and affordable 1:1 tablet solution built for learning and made for the classroom from Google. Google Play for Education is the new online destination that empowers educators to easily discover and share content that meets the needs of their individual students, classrooms, or districts.

Learn more.

google.com/edu/tablets



Easy Access to Google Apps

The HTPS schools have been using Google Apps since 2010 and are already familiar with the benefits it offers for students and teachers to work together in the same document. Tablets with Google Play for Education have made it easy for students to access their Google Apps accounts through a single log-in. Teachers frequently share images and documents for their classes through Google Drive. According to Meyers, the use of Docs is particularly appreciated by students who have difficulty with paper and pencil tasks.

Individualized learning

Nexus 7 tablets give the power to learn at their own pace. As Google Play for Education allows apps to be deployed to students' accounts rather than to the devices, teachers can get an app to a specific student instantly. If a student is struggling with spelling, the teacher can quickly find and deploy it to them to aid learning. Equally, if a student is excelling in a subject, the teacher can help accelerate their progress with more advanced learning apps.

Handler comments, "When the students are equipped with Nexus tablets, the class feels like a more creative, dynamic learning environment. Teachers and visitors have commented on the buzzy, productive atmosphere."

"It can be a challenge introducing new technologies mid-way through the academic year, but as the Google Nexus 7 tablets were so quick and easy to set up, the whole process was simple and didn't give our IT team a single headache."

— Joel T. Handler, director of IT, Hillsborough Township Public Schools

HTPS is now seen as a leader in the region on the use of information technology in education and representatives from 15 other districts have visited its schools to see the technology in action. It has come a long way towards reaching its aim of integrating technology into the classroom, helping to prepare students for the world of work.

"It is now natural for students to pick up a tablet and use it to help them learn, rather than viewing technology as something to be studied. Through the ease of use of tablets with Google Play for Education, we have been able to achieve this," concludes Handler.

