

Using technology to help transform teaching in Romania

At a Glance

Initial goal

- Offering students the opportunity to learn using modern facilities.

What actually happened

- The school acquired 30 Chromebooks and an interactive whiteboard.

Final accomplishment

- They have transformed the way of teaching. Now everything is much more interactive, and the students are more engaged and attentive in the classroom.
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Background

The Technology High School “Doamna Chiajna” is located in the village Roșu, Chiajna, Ilfov County, close to Bucharest. It was founded in 2004 and it is a public educational institution. The high school offers the following types of education: preschool (4 groups), primary (7 classes), secondary (6 classes), high school – day-time and evening classes (12 classes). In total, there are 819 children, of which 511 are high school students. Also, the staff includes 47 teachers (32 of them being permanent). High school specializations are: Sports Instructor, Electronics – Automation, Tourism and Food. School has large classrooms, newly renovated reading room, a virtual library, soccer fields with lighting system.

Challenge

Students and parents wanted to be aligned to the current study trends, and this determined the management to equip the school with 30 Chromebooks and an interactive board. The equipment used previously were outdated, running really slow and making the pupils lose interest during classes.

“Before using Chromebooks we had some old computers (45 pieces) with an unit and a screen, located in two laboratories. Being much older than what the pupils already had at home, this gradually caused a lack of interest in terms of attending classes. Besides, we permanently had repair and maintenance costs.” – Veronica Apostol, School’s Deputy Director.



“Chromebooks are easy to use, they have a friendly design, take less space and generate no maintenance costs. Their operation – using documents stored online – offers greater ease in working and mobility.”

—Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director

Solution

Mrs. Veronica Apostol believes that using Chromebooks is the ideal solution. “Chromebooks are easy to use, they have a friendly design, take less space and generate no maintenance costs. Their operation – using documents stored online – offers greater ease in working and mobility.” – Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director.

Prior to owning Chromebooks, the computer classes were held in a laboratory using a simple projector. With the help of projections, teachers were making various presentations related to the lessons. Projects were created and saved on old computers. Being accessible to anyone, this sometimes lead to accidental document deletion. Now, everybody is creating and working with documents stored on Google Drive, and the students are satisfied with the fact that they can access information from anywhere, which gives them autonomy in doing their assigned homework. The high school managed to save some money too, as the new Chromebooks no longer need repairing. They are easy to use, quite fast and virus protected, offering teachers more time for practice during classes.

After receiving the 30 Chromebooks, those who operate them (students and teachers) have created an account, which everyone calls “work e-mail”. Ever since the beginning of the experiment, using these devices has been a simple task. All teachers now want to teach in this laboratory in order to offer students practical examples from the Internet, and because there are so many demands, laboratory utilization follows a planning.

“Everyone has a work e-mail address, including teachers. We always login to our account and after that we start studying the Google applications. For example, the twelfth grade creates sites. Students login to their account and then start using Google Sites by following the steps in order to create a site on Google. They have to choose a theme, each student being asked to have an unique idea. I explained to them how Google+, Google Calendar and Google Maps work. Pupils really like to use Google apps, they find it refreshing, daring and useful.” – Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director.

In the 8th grade there classes dedicated to studying YouTube. Students are given access to a movie editing program to create videos. This way they can create new materials and then upload them to their own channels.

The gym teacher also insisted on having a theoretical laboratory class. He found the idea really useful and interesting, deciding to show students how the organs of an athlete work during a workout.

“Pupils from 5th to 8th grade really like the Google Maps App. They also discovered Google+ and now we work in small groups while using the app.”

—Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director

As Chromebook users, students like the friendly design, the lessons' interactivity, the fact that they can find informations in real-time using Google Search. If there is something they do not understand or know about, pupils will look it up themselves. This is a good way for them to learn the lesson during the class. Most students said they want to use the Chromebooks as support to finding an easier path in life. They are perfectly aware that keeping up with technology and the use of online tools serves their purpose.

About Google Apps for Education

Over 30 million students, faculty, and staff use Google Apps for Education worldwide. Google Apps is a free suite of hosted email and collaboration applications exclusively for schools and universities. You can learn more and sign up to try it out by visiting our website:

www.google.co.uk/a/edu

About Google Chromebooks

Chromebooks are fast, portable computers that give students access to the web's rich educational tools & resources. Educators can manage Chromebooks easily from their web-based Admin Console. And starting at just £199 per device including Google Apps for Education for free, these computers make technology affordable for schools. You can learn more here:

www.google.co.uk/intl/en/chrome/education/devices/

"There were no problems operating the Chromebooks. All information, all lessons are explained at the beginning of the class and when anyone is in need, we give them our full support." – Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director.

"Some school representatives visit us (for example, school No. 174 from Bucharest) to get advice about this project. They want to benefit from this program and use the Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education. We allowed some students from other schools to come and learn using our Chromebooks." – Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director.

Asked about the suggestions she would make to those who implement Google Apps for Education, Mrs. Apostol said there is nothing to suggest. They are really happy with the new high school management application. It helps them manage all the information related to carrying out teaching activities, filling in and checking students' grades and setting up the exams schedule. Parents can watch the school and the students in real-time and everyone is satisfied with this new transparency of information.

One thing could help them though: they need a contact from a Chromebook authorized service, in case they need assistance in the future.

Benefits

The greatest asset was the increasing school matriculation rate. The main reason was the "Class of the Future" – as the lab equipped with 30 Chromebooks and interactive whiteboard is being called. In the past children who live in the village of Roșu tended to go for schools in Bucharest (located near the village), because there is a widely spread idea that the quality of the information taught in classrooms in Bucharest is superior to that taught in the suburb schools. Starting the project "Class of the Future" has made the number of applications for enrollment increase significantly. Two new preparatory classes and two fifth grade classes have been created, and new students of grades sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth have transferred from other schools.

Students are more motivated and very interested in the subject taught during classes, because everything is now more interactive. Previously children still played the truant, but now this does not happen anymore.

"As a conclusion, the impact has been positive and particularly strong. Many children have transferred to our school, although until last year they chose to go to Bucharest. Now they come here, even if we are in a village. Instead of one, we now have two preparatory classes. And while last year there was an average of 14 students in the 15th grade, now the average has risen to 24." – Veronica Apostol, School's Deputy Director.