

The Fountainhead School makes lessons engaging using Google Apps and Chromebooks



At a Glance

About The Fountainhead School

- Private institution in Surat, India with 1,472 students in nursery school through grade 12
- Google Apps for Education user since 2010
- Chromebooks user since 2013

Goals

- Improve teaching and learning by incorporating faster, more reliable technology into classrooms
- Integrate digital tools into the curriculum

Approach

- Switched all students, teachers and staff to Google Apps
- Introduced Chromebooks to all students in grades five through nine.

Results

- Helped students build research, collaboration and presentation skills
- Saved 10% of class time
- Encouraged joint lesson-planning and resource-sharing among teachers

About The Fountainhead School

The Fountainhead School, a private institution in Surat, India, has the bold vision to revolutionize the Indian education system by emphasizing the joy of learning. What began in 2005 as a preschool with six students has grown to 1,472 students in nursery school through grade 12. Fountainhead's mission is to nurture leaders through primary greatness – in order words, to help shape leaders who have both character and competence.

Goals and Challenges

After expanding the school and building a new campus in 2008, Fountainhead wanted to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning, using technology as a tool to aid the learning process. Fountainhead began a "bring your own device" (BYOD) program, encouraging students to bring laptops from home. Because students used a range of devices, they faced some issues: files that worked on one machine wouldn't open on another; students interrupted class to look for power adapters; and some laptops took several minutes to start at the beginning of each class.

Solution

In 2010, Fountainhead switched its unreliable email system to Gmail so students could reach teachers beyond normal school hours. "Because of its popularity for personal email, people were aware of the Gmail interface," says Vardan Kabra, co-founder and teacher at Fountainhead. "It was easy to get people acquainted and simple for them to use."

School leadership explored introducing technology beyond email. They started asking teachers what kinds of applications and devices would be useful while investigating case studies from other schools. The head of IT started a movement to Google Apps for Education, a suite of free



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—Suparna Khadepaw, a fifth grade teacher at Fountainhead School

productivity tools for collaboration in the classroom. Since they were already using Gmail, Apps became a natural extension of their Google accounts. The administration began hands-on training in small groups, led by a technology team of 25 volunteer teachers.

In 2013, after working with Google Apps for three years, Fountainhead decided to use Chromebooks, fast and easy-to-use computers that allow students to connect with each other and with online educational resources. All students in grades five through nine now have their own Chromebooks.

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— Vardan Kabra, co-founder and teacher at The Fountainhead School

Benefits

A new way to learn

Teachers and school leaders have noticed a change in how students approach learning. “The focus is not so much on note-taking or absorbing information, it’s about understanding how to find information,” says Kabra, who teaches a grade 11 class called Theory of Knowledge. “Students spend time discussing ideas rather than listening to lectures.” In social studies and science classrooms, students use Chromebooks to research in small groups, then present their results to the class. With the mobility of Chromebooks, they can easily work outside of class times.

“Chromebooks and Google Apps facilitate development of research, collaboration and presentation skills – exactly what we want to build in our students,” Kabra says.

“Chromebooks have revamped the learning process,” says Suparna Khadepaw, a fifth grade teacher at Fountainhead School. “With this technology the students are more than enthusiastic to become independent learners.”

Improved collaboration and knowledge-sharing

Kabra says the move to Google Apps has improved information-sharing and collaboration among teachers and students.

In Khadepaw’s class, students use Google Apps to work together on group projects. For a recent unit on biomes, groups of four compiled their research and wrote joint reports using Docs, then shared their work with their classmates through Google Drive with just a button click.

Google Docs, and particularly Slides, help teachers work together on lesson planning and joint presentations, eliminating duplicate work. Teachers store best practices and curricular materials in Google Drive. “Because everything is searchable, teachers have easy access to any resource they need,” Kabra says. The ease of permission-sharing allows each person to share information with the appropriate people; accountants, for instance, share financial information with limited stakeholders, while students publish their portfolios to their teachers, classmates and families using Drive and Sites.

Simplicity and time savings

Chinki Chhapiya, head of IT at Fountainhead, says the biggest benefit of Google Apps is the simplicity of a single platform. “Because there’s a single sign-on, teachers and students don’t have to remember multiple user names and passwords,” she says.

Google Education Solutions

Google Apps for Education: A free suite of communication and collaboration tools – including Gmail, Classroom, Docs and Drive – for learning anywhere, anytime, on any device.

Classroom: A tool within the Google Apps for Education suite that allows educators to easily create, review, and organize assignments, as well as communicate directly with students.

Chromebooks: A range of fast, affordable devices that update automatically, and are easy for schools to set up and manage.

For more information visit
www.google.com/edu/apps

The speed and battery life of Chromebooks saves each an average of 10% of class time on booting up and loading software applications. “They’re up and running immediately and we don’t have the hassle of power draining during the day,” Kabra says.

Fountainhead is driving student engagement and encouraging students to take ownership of their learning by embracing digital tools and training teachers to use technology in their classrooms. Over the next year, Kabra looks forward to continuing this trajectory while improving learning outcomes for all students.