

## Amherst Central Schools encourage collaboration across grade levels and at home using Google for Education tools



### What they wanted to do

- Introduce a new email platform
- Help students and teachers collaborate within and between classrooms

### What they did

- Introduced Google Apps for Education in 2010
- Rolled out Chromebooks districtwide
- Planned a 1:1 initiative to be completed by 2018

### What they accomplished

- Integrated technology into every lesson plan
- Encouraged parents to be an active part of their students' education
- Personalized learning for each student
- Increased collaboration across classes and grade levels



### Background

Located in the largest suburb of Buffalo, New York, [Amherst Central Schools](#) are known statewide for their music and arts programs. The district educates 2,900 student across two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Amherst Central Schools' mission is to prepare its diverse student body to succeed in their future careers and to be productive citizens of the community.

### Challenge

Amherst Central Schools wanted to introduce tools to empower students and staff to collaborate and share ideas across classroom and grade levels, both at school and when working from home. The schools also needed a new affordable email platform for students and teachers because their previous system was clunky and lacked sufficient storage.

*"With Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks, we're teaching students to collaborate, solve problems creatively and work productively. When they graduate from Amherst, they'll be ready to meet the challenges they face."*

*—Anthony Panella, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Amherst Central Schools*

### Solution

In 2010 Amherst Central Schools chose Gmail as its email system and introduced Google Apps for Education for all students and teachers. Shortly thereafter, the district launched a device pilot program and rolled out Chromebooks districtwide. Today classrooms for grades 3-12 are outfitted with Chromebook carts with one device for every student. The combination of Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks encourages students to collaborate and work in teams and allow teachers to share resources and best practices.

"Learning is meant to be a social and collaborative process," says Anthony Panella, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction at Amherst Central Schools. "Other devices that we evaluated were designed to be individual devices and didn't foster collaboration like Chromebooks."

Currently, classrooms for grades 3 through 6 are outfitted with Chromebook carts with one device for every student. Students in grades 7 through 12 have access to Chromebook carts. The district's goal is to introduce a 1:1 model districtwide by fall 2018, with pre K-2 using Google Play for Edu Samsung tablets and grades 3-12 using Chromebooks.

### Benefits

#### Making technology invisible

Chromebooks have become an integral part of lesson plans. Says Panella, "Teachers used to say, 'Take out your pen and pencil.' Now they say, 'Take out your Chromebooks.'" Students can sign on to Chromebooks quickly and easily. Logging onto devices used to eat up 15 minutes of instructional time, and now Chromebooks turn on in 10 seconds, so more time can be spent learning.

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## Google for Education

A solution built for learning and designed for the classroom that includes easy-to-manage, affordable devices like Chromebooks, productivity tools like Google Apps for Education with Classroom, and limitless educational content in Google Play for Education. Together these tools help teachers inspire curiosity, while students learn better together, wherever they are.

For more information visit:  
[www.google.com/edu](http://www.google.com/edu)

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With Google for Education tools, students are working more efficiently since technology becomes invisible. Students are researching and writing 10-page papers on Chromebooks. For example, 12th grade English students use Chromebooks to write argumentative essays and research papers, find sources and formulate an argument using Chromebooks. They can toggle back and forth between the Internet and their document, making content creation easy. Even students as young as second grade are creating content using Google Docs and giving Google Presentations.

### Getting parents involved in education

With Google Apps for Education, parents are able to be more involved in their children’s education. For instance, parents can monitor the progress of assignments since students can access their work no matter where they are. When Jake, a third grader, created a presentation about Canadian culture and history, he was able to work on the assignment at home and share his final piece with his parents.

Teachers at Amherst Central Schools use videos to help parents be an active part of their student’s education. For example, a math teacher took a video of a student working on the addition of fractions and uploaded it to Google Drive, so the student’s parents could help their children work on an assignment at home by referencing the 30-second video. The district also uses videos to demonstrate to parents how much their children have learned throughout the school year.

### Learning in their own way

With Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks, students can customize their learning and work at their own pace. In some classes, students work on different assignments at the same time, while teachers focus on providing one-on-one guidance. For example, a small group of students might engage in a guided reading with their teacher, while others work on personalized reading assignments and a third group responds to questions about what they’ve read. Students turn in their assignments via Google Classroom, then receive feedback directly from their teacher.

“With Chromebooks, our students didn’t have to be in a specific computer lab,” says Rich Crozier, assistant principal at Smallwood Elementary School and Amherst High School. “They can work at their own pace at any location in the building.”

### Collaboration across grade levels

Google Apps for Education encourages collaboration, not only within the classroom, but beyond the classroom walls and among grade levels. For example, fifth grade students created textbooks in Google Presentations, and kindergarten teachers assigned students to read those books as a homework assignment. Then the kindergartners answered questions in small groups and shared their thoughts with students in other kindergarten classes.

When students work on team projects, they no longer have to schedule a time to meet at one person’s house with poster board and other supplies in tow. Instead, they can work on Google Presentations from their own living rooms and collaborate with each other remotely. Each student can contribute her part when it’s convenient, using a shared document to make additions and edits in real time.

“With Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks, we’re teaching students to collaborate, solve problems creatively and work productively,” Panella says. “When they graduate from Amherst, they’ll be ready to meet the challenges they face.”