



David Ross Education Trust
Broadening Horizons

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Find a low-cost, easy-to-manage technology solution for a network of 30 academies
- Help young people and teachers to become more tech-savvy and interested in technology
- Bring a greater sense of collaboration to the classroom

What they did

- Deployed Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education so students and teachers can collaborate better through group projects and presentations
- Inspired sharing and transparency through assignments completed in Google Docs and presentations done through Google Hangouts
- Encouraged a culture of feedback through comments in Google Docs
- Allowed students and teachers to experiment with education apps from the Chrome Web Store

What they accomplished

- Cut IT costs by over 50% and dramatically reduced IT time spent managing aging desktops
 - Improved students' writing and communications skills
 - Encouraged students to collaborate on projects and envision creative ways to showcase their work through apps from the Chrome Web Store
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David Ross Education Trust develops a tech-savvy community with Chromebooks and Google for Education

Background

The David Ross Education Trust (DRET) manages nearly 30 primary and secondary academies across the Midlands and East of England. As a firm believer in every child's right to an outstanding education, DRET's mission is to support each of its 9,000 students to achieve a high standard of academics.

For more information, please visit: www.dret.co.uk

Challenge

Last year the UK government began encouraging more schools to fall under the management of education trusts, and DRET expanded rapidly. Between 2012-2014, DRET more than tripled from seven to 30 schools and plans to add several more.

DRET had to think about how to scale IT in schools with limited resources. Most schools that joined DRET had Windows-based desktops and iPads locked up in computer labs. Computing was often treated as a separate subject that was unrelated to the core curriculum, which left many teachers and students unenthused.

"The challenge was finding a low-cost way to bring our students more access to technology, in a way that's a more natural part of classroom life rather than isolated in computer labs where students might spend an hour," says Guy Shearer, Head of IT at DRET.

Desktops were also time consuming to maintain. Shearer and his colleagues often found themselves on the road, driving from school to school to fix computers, install software updates, and train people how to use Windows. There were so many issues that schools retained local technicians to address minor, but frequent, problems with the technology.

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—Guy Shearer, Head of IT at DRET

Solution

After evaluating several cloud-based options, DRET selected Google for Education (Google Apps and Chromebooks). DRET worked with Google partner C-Learning to set up pilots at interested schools, and Shearer was delighted to see students pick up the technology almost immediately. Many students were already familiar with Google.com and Gmail and knew how to log into their own Apps accounts to access their assignments and Chrome

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—Guy Shearer, Head of IT at DRET



Pupils from Falconer's Hill Academy, Daventry, take advantage of the Google Chromebooks.

apps. In fact, students often had figured out how to use the technology before their teachers.

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After several successful pilots, Shearer and his team began setting up Google Apps accounts and Chromebooks at schools. So far, DRET has deployed 3,000 Apps accounts and 500 Chromebooks at 13 schools, and plans to double this by the end of the year. The Trust are now rolling out Apps accounts to everyone in the DRET community.

“When we learned about Google Apps and Chromebooks, it was a no brainer to switch,” Shearer says. “From a cost perspective, we can buy and manage twice as many Chromebooks as we can desktops or iPads.” DRET is slowly replacing every desktop with a Chromebook to save on management costs and space. Previously it cost about £11,000 to fill a single computer lab, including capital costs and technicians’ time. Now, DRET can spend less than £6,000 outfitting a single classroom with Chromebooks and Google Apps. As a result, schools have been able to repurpose old computer labs as classrooms.

Benefits

With Google for Education, DRET has been able to quickly scale an engaging, collaborative technology platform that students and teachers love. At many schools, lessons now include lots of group-based work and blogging, which have motivated students to work harder since “the more they know people are viewing their work, the better they write,” Shearer says.

Sharing and transparency are fast becoming the norm in the classroom, thanks to the collaborative aspect of Google Docs. Students enjoy typing assignments in Docs and having teachers and peers assess their work immediately, and they sometimes present work to other classrooms over Hangouts. Some classrooms vote for “the most helpful comments” to encourage students to give each other better feedback. Furthermore, now that students can configure their own share settings in Docs, they’re naturally learning how to be more responsible digital citizens. “We’re getting students to think about things like who can and should see their work,” Shearer says. “They never had to do that before.”

About Google Apps for Education

Google Apps for Education is a suite of free, secure tools that includes Gmail, Calendar, Sites & Documents. Use it for collaboration and communication no matter where you are or which device you're using. Over 40 million students, faculty, and staff in schools around the world have gone Google with Google Apps for Education. You can learn more and sign up to try it out by visiting our website:

goo.gl/3oZLEv

About Google Chromebooks

Chromebooks are designed to help students and teachers get things done quickly and easily. Devices start at £166 and are simple to manage at scale through a web browser. With several devices to choose from, it's easy to find a Chromebook that meets your students' needs. You can learn more here:

goo.gl/MW51xU

Accessibility was another major gain that DRET didn't even realize it needed. With Google Drive, students can access assignments and other classroom resources from anywhere, virtually turning any device into their own computer simply by logging in. All of their favourite Chrome apps are automatically loaded as well. "This morning I saw a student editing a presentation at 7am," Shearer says. "We don't expect students to work at all hours of course, but they like being able to work on their own time. It's making them more active, independent learners."

In the IT department things have changed dramatically. Instead of traveling from school to school fixing computers, Shearer's team can configure Apps accounts and Chromebooks remotely through the Web and have it go from box to student within minutes. Google automatically pushes out software updates, so now the team rarely has to travel and can rely more on local technicians at each school.

"Moving to Google has freed us up to spend more time with students in the classroom and less time in the back rooms, maintaining computers and managing servers," Shearer says. "All of us really love the interactive part of the job." With more time to spare, the Trust set up a programme called Digital Leaders in which select students are given the responsibility to teach and train their peers and teachers how to use Google Apps for Education.

Students can more easily communicate with one another, even between different schools. "DRET schools do a lot of inter-school sporting competitions, after school activities and arts programmes, and technology like Google for Education allows everyone to share their work," Shearer says. "When a school joins DRET, we want them to feel like they're joining a community and can easily collaborate with other schools."