

Carmel Catholic High School moves toward more engaging, interactive classes with Google tools



About Carmel Catholic High School

- Private Catholic school for grades 9–12
- Serves 1,300 students
- Located in Mundelein, Illinois
- [Website](#)

What they wanted to do

- Create interactive lessons without the limitations of computer labs
- Encourage students to study the world outside their classrooms

What they did

- Introduced Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education

What they accomplished

- Added sophisticated technology without the need for extensive training or IT maintenance
- Strengthened lesson concepts with engaging materials such as videos and slides
- Reduced time spent on managing class materials so that more time is spent on learning



Organization

[Carmel Catholic High School](#), located in Mundelein, Illinois, provides a quality Catholic education for approximately 1,300 young men and women in grades 9–12. The school is committed to meeting the academic, physical, social, and spiritual needs of its students, and centers its teaching around a commitment to community service and respect for all people.

Challenge

Carmel Catholic High School teachers and staff strive to give students ample opportunities to explore the world around them. Bringing diverse and engaging experiences into the classroom requires technology that's easy to share with every student, and that won't wipe out the IT budget. When Joe Schultz was hired as the tech support specialist, the primary technology at the school was Microsoft Office which students used in computer labs, and teachers used for email.

Unfortunately, limited access to the computer labs hindered teachers' ability to do much beyond lectures, the standard teaching format at the time. "The labs were always booked," says Shelley Lindgren, Carmel Catholic High School's business and technology department chair. "It inhibited what we wanted to do with students — we couldn't be very interactive."

In an attempt to address the problem, Carmel Catholic High School purchased Android tablets for every student in 2011. But students and teachers still used Microsoft Office and struggled with juggling different versions of applications and attachments on the devices — a process that was both confusing and time consuming.

"We didn't yet realize that what we were doing with Office, we could have been doing better with [Google Apps for Education](#)," Schultz says. He and his colleagues decided to move away from tablets and toward devices with integrated keyboards, such as laptops, in hopes of making everyone's life easier.

Solution

"We thought about buying different brands of laptops or going to a BYOD policy," Schultz says. "But other schools in our diocese were using [Chromebooks](#), and we heard nothing but positive things about them. From a cost perspective, they were hard to beat. Also, we'd previously had very good experience with Google Apps support — they were always available and willing to solve any issues."

With that in mind, in 2015 the school purchased 1,400 Chromebooks to enhance their existing 1:1 program. At the same time, Schultz and his colleagues decided to take a closer look at [Google Apps for Education](#) to determine if there was an opportunity for teachers and students to use those tools more widely, or in place of the various other tools they'd bounced back and forth between while on the tablets.



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— Shelley Lindgren, business and technology department chair, Carmel Catholic High School

Google for Education

A solution built for learning and designed for the classroom that includes easy-to-manage affordable devices like Chromebooks and tablets, a "mission control" for class through Google Classroom, a powerful suite of productivity tools with Google Apps for Education, and new ways to engage students like Google Expeditions. Together these tools help teachers save time, increase collaboration, and inspire curiosity while students discover and learn together on any device, from anywhere.

"Google Apps for Education gives us all the email addresses we need and unlimited space to save files on Google Drive – and it's all free," says Schultz. "But it's not just about cost. It's an effective product that meets our needs, so we don't feel like we're skimping to save money." Today, via a single login on any Chromebook, every student and teacher can access the entire Google Apps for Education suite, including [Google Classroom](#), a tool that helps teachers organize, share, and grade assignments online.

Benefits

Easy transition with minimal maintenance

Since Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education require minimal oversight and management, Schultz and his colleagues spend less time troubleshooting IT issues and training students and teachers how to use technology. "Not having to manage a server for Microsoft is a big help," says Schultz, who works alongside 3 other staff members devoted to IT. "I'm less busy solving technology related problems than I was a few years ago." Schultz plans to devote the saved time to projects he'd needed to put on the back burner in the past.

Both teachers and students quickly learned how to use Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education, greatly reducing the need for Schultz and his IT team to host training sessions. While teachers have relied heavily on each other for technology advice to date, Carmel Catholic High School recently hired a dedicated technology integration professional to guide teachers on how to best use Google Apps for Education to enhance their lessons.

Improved organization for teachers

Today, thanks to Classroom, teachers spend more time developing engaging coursework that inspires their students, and less time keeping track of homework assignments and class resources.

Thanks to free, unlimited storage in Google Drive, teachers no longer have to deal with maxed-out storage for their documents. Not having to worry about storage played a key role in the school's decision to use Google Apps for Education, Schultz says. "Each of us can store all the documents and pictures we need and, even better, it's free."

Inspiring creativity, using time well

To support their instructional best practices, teachers now have the flexibility to add interactive exercises to their lessons that can take place outside of the classroom walls. For example, Tessa Burke, previously a fine arts teacher and now Carmel Catholic High School's associate director of communications, uses Chromebooks to keep students engaged during 70-minute class sessions.

"For photography class, we go for walks with the Chromebooks and take pictures of geometric shapes," Burke says. "In just a few minutes, we upload the pictures to a shared folder on Google Drive, and immediately self-review and peer-review the work."

Lindgren also goes beyond the bounds of lectures to give her students a deeper understanding of their lessons. "I teach AP economics, and it's so easy to add a video or a slide to Classroom that helps explain what I'm teaching," she says. "It makes everyone's life easier."