

Upper Grand School District turns to Android tablets and Google Play for Education to teach students anytime anywhere



About Upper Grand School District (UGDSB)

- www.ugdsb.on.ca
- Guelph, Ontario
- 33,000 students

Goals

- Support universal learning with technology that would help students learn and express their knowledge in different ways

Approach

- Provided students and teachers with Google Nexus 7 tablets and Google Play for Education

Results

- Expanded learning resources to accommodate all learning styles
- Encouraged students to collaborate seamlessly



About Upper Grand School District

The Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) serves rural and suburban communities in the Wellington and Dufferin Counties in Ontario, Canada. The district's 2,500 teachers educate a total of 33,000 students. To achieve its goal of high graduation and literacy rates, the district focuses on setting up all students for success, regardless of their learning profiles.

Goals

UGDSB subscribes to the philosophy called **universal design for learning**, which provides the supports necessary to give each student an equal opportunity. In accordance with this approach, teachers reduce barriers to learning in order to meet the individual learning needs of students. The district realized the potential for technology to enable students to access learning and to demonstrate their understanding.

"We put an emphasis on learning for all, making sure all students succeed," says Bill MacKenzie, IT/Program Liaison at UGDSB. "For example, when we were using technology with special needs students, we also realized that all students could benefit from that type of learning."

UGDSB weighed the pros and cons of various tablets and struggled to find a device that had strong enterprise management tools for setting up devices, distributing apps, and managing accounts. Fortunately, Android tablets, in combination with Google Play for Education, provided an all-in-one solution for device management and collaborative learning. Since teachers and students were already using Chromebooks and had log-ins via Google Apps for Education in the district's Google domain, adding and integrating tablets was simple.

Solution

UGDSB piloted Nexus 7 tablets with Google Play for Education in early 2014, by introducing the tablets in classrooms with special needs students and observing if, and how, they would change students' learning. Teachers noticed that students felt comfortable using the devices and that it made the classroom more interactive and engaging. Students were able to shape their learning and the type of content that they accessed.

For example, students who struggled with forming sentences on paper and grasped auditory learning were able to dictate stories by using the voice input option built into the Android keyboard. When they saw the story that they wrote through dictation, their faces lit up with excitement at what they accomplished. That watershed moment was when the district decided to embrace tablets and digital learning to enhance curriculum delivery.

Today, the district has 500 Nexus 7 tablets and 6,000 Chromebooks that provide a secure, centralized solution for learning and collaboration. Teachers can use Google Play for Education to send educational apps and games to students without needing the intervention of the IT department. Students can collaborate on school projects and edit each other's work on tablets.

"As one example, working with student-directed STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Science) construction projects, students are regularly communicating with me and other team members through a shared document," says David Scott, a grade five teacher at Westminster Woods Public School. "They are documenting their plans through text, showing their progress through photographs, and discussing future directions for their projects. There is a very genuine dialogue that captures both their thinking and their ability to problem solve their way through situations."

Benefits

Deeper engagement

The apps in Google Play for Education give students, especially those with special needs, the opportunity to interact with different types of educational content. "A couple of students, who struggle academically and tend to have lower self-esteem, blossomed when they used the tablet and Chromebook," says Joe Commadari, a junior teacher at Gateway Drive Public School. "This technological venue provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate their intelligence."

Easy management

The IT Department has greatly appreciated the ease of managing resources and student accounts in Google Play for Education. Setting up the Nexus tablets is seamless—teachers can use the tablets within minutes of opening the boxes. Teachers easily manage apps and accounts, so they no longer feel inhibited by technology.

Since teachers and students are using Google Apps for Education, when they open their tablets they enter a personalized environment. They can easily access the apps sent to them via Google Play for Education, and pick up where they left off. Teachers assign students specific content based on their interests and needs. For example, when kindergartners need help with counting and math basics, teachers give them additional opportunities to practice by assigning the [Kindergarten Kids Math Lite app](#).

Simplicity

In UGDSB schools, technology gets out of the way, so teachers can focus on teaching and students can learn without distractions. Students seamlessly access content in Google Apps for Education or web-based interfaces. Using the tablets in the classroom is second nature for students and teachers.



"The tablet has changed my classroom in a number of ways. The change started with understanding that the tablet, that each student was about to be assigned, was an important tool that would enable them to become convergent learners; learners that would shape the form of learning and to some degree the content of learning as well."

—Joe Commadari, Junior Teacher at Gateway Drive Public School

Google for Education

Google for Education provides open technologies to improve learning for everyone, anywhere. Solutions consist of affordable devices, innovative tools, and educational content designed for learning and built for the classroom.

For more information, visit:
www.google.com/edu

Collaboration

Tablets give students and teachers the ability to interact and collaborate in the classroom and beyond. Rather than teachers lecturing in front of the class, students are able to take the spotlight by projecting their screens in order to share their work with classmates.

Students edit each other's work, leading to a deeper level of knowledge sharing. Using technology and collaborating with classmates becomes a game instead of a chore. Students love sharing their photos and documents in Google Drive across devices by bumping one device to another, what the kids call "high fiving."

"My students have been really excited to share the work they do in a safe place. They get a lot of peer feedback from their friends, and I know that the work they produce—or if we create a class blog—the comments we get are going to be from their peers."

—Andrew Cloutier, Elementary School Curriculum Leader at USGD

Secure, shareable devices

Each tablet holds up to five student log-ins, so students have control and ownership over content in their personalized accounts. Secure log-ins erase the fear that some kids have of a classmate viewing her photos, documents, or saved resources.

"Students are more engaged with tasks, and they recognize situations when their ideas and approaches can be supported by the technologies available to them on their tablets," Scott says. "They have the confidence required to pursue these avenues of inquiry independently."

With tablets in 20 schools, UGDSB has become a leader in technology for education. By sharing their impact, the district has inspired educational leaders in Canada and beyond to introduce Nexus 7 tablets and Google Play for Education into their classrooms and schools.

