

Mounds View schools boost student preparedness with all-day kindergarten using Android tablets with Google Play for Education



About Mounds View Public Schools' Technology

- School district in Minneapolis/St. Paul suburbs serving more than 10,000 students
- Google Apps for Education since 2010
- Chromebooks since 2012
- Nexus 7 tablets since 2014

Goals

- Prepare all students for postsecondary success
- Improve document sharing and collaboration for teachers and students
- Offer more teaching and learning options for all-day kindergarten

Approach

- Give kindergartners access to fun and engaging apps
- Encourage teachers to personalize learning
- Provide students with work portfolios using Google Docs
- Help teachers meet and share ideas with Google Hangouts

Results

- Students work at their own speed using guided learning apps
- Teachers customize learning for student needs
- Students learn faster through recording reading sessions and video projects



The equity promise

Mounds View Public Schools serves more than 10,000 students in the suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The district's teachers and administrators embrace the idea of the "equity promise," ensuring that all students will be prepared for postsecondary success regardless of race, class, or disability.

"We want our students to be ready for any option they choose after they leave high school," explains Susan Herder, the district's instructional technology coordinator. "The equity promise idea affects everything we do—like how we personalize learning or give students greater access to learning tools."

Paving the way for student success

In 2010, Herder began the search for new tools to improve sharing and storage. "We didn't have ways to hold onto information—students' work would be wiped out every summer when we cleaned out our servers," Herder says.

The district chose Google Apps for Education for the collaboration and document access tools that previous server systems lacked. "Now students have a complete record of their work, and they can work on assignments at the library or at home without the need to be in a school building," Herder says.

Google Apps also makes life easier for teachers, says Jenny Heyer, a kindergarten teacher at Island Lake Elementary School: "We often take part in professional learning communities, talking about new ideas for improving student achievement," she says. "We can work together even if we're not in the same place using Google Hangouts and Google Docs." To meet demands of learning assessments, the district also purchased 3,000 Chromebooks for classrooms in grades 3 to 12.

Changing the instructional model

When Mounds View Public Schools introduced all-day kindergarten in fall 2014—a key step in the district's equity promise strategy—Herder and the district's kindergarten teachers had to make the most of the extra teaching time. "Going to all-day kindergarten changes the instructional model," Herder says. "How do you structure the longer days? How do you give every child personalized learning?"

Tablets, Herder decided, would help teachers bring innovative learning tools to kindergartners—but the question was which tablet to choose. Herder and the teachers considered a number of different tablets, but Herder liked the format and management tools of the Nexus 7 tablets with Google Play for Education and purchased 200 tablets to start.

Guided, personalized reading and math lessons

As all-day kindergarten debuted, teachers used Nexus 7 tablets to help students learn on their own. Kindergartners learn at their own speed, completing and redoing exercises until they're confident in their learning.

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.
- Google Classroom is a teacher-focused application that brings together all the parts of Google Apps—including Google Drive, Google Docs, and Google Presentations—and helps teachers keep class projects organized and communicate better with students.
- Google Apps is a free suite of communication and collaboration tools for schools including email, calendar, and documents accessible from any device, at any time.
- Chromebooks are fast, secure, portable computers that allow students to collaborate and share their work. Devices start at \$249 and are easy to set up and manage.
- Android tablets are affordable devices that are easy for schools to set up and manage, and designed for students to share.
- Google Play for Education is a content store built just for schools, so teachers can get the right apps and books to the right students, right away.

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



Lynn Erickson, a kindergarten teacher at Island Lake Elementary School, uses the tablets during guided reading and math time. For example, the Raz-Kids app allows students to listen to a book, read along with the text, and record themselves reading—which helps Erickson save time. “I can continue to instruct the class, and I can listen to each student’s recording later,” she says.

Creative exercises reinforce good behavior, open up classroom to parents

Instead of simply lecturing very young students on the basics of good classroom behavior, Erickson lets students show each other what good behavior looks like using the tablets and their cameras. “I record students making good choices about how they work together with their classmates and show self-control,” Erickson explains. “We watch the videos later, or look at photos and talk about what it means to be a well-behaved student.”

Heyer has also used the tablets’ recording feature to bring students’ technology experience closer to parents. “I let the kids make videos of each other, and then I email the videos to parents,” Heyer says. “The parents were very impressed with what their kids were doing with the technology.”

“We’re giving students power and choices when we let them learn on their own. It not only helps us meet everyone’s needs individually, but it makes learning fun.”

—Lynn Erickson, Kindergarten Teacher, Mounds View Public Schools

Greater teacher flexibility and control

Kindergarten teachers can also bring more creativity to their classrooms using Google Play for Education to choose apps that get students excited about learning. Google Play for Education was one of the factors that led to the choice of Nexus 7 tablets for the new all-day kindergarten classes, says Herder. “With other devices like iPads, getting permission to choose and implement an app was time-consuming,” she says. “We had to request funding every time a teacher wanted to download apps.”

Google Play for Education lets teachers individually choose and download apps to their classroom’s tablets. “Management is minimal,” Herder says, and teachers became experts on using the Google Play for Education store after simply studying a short Google Doc created by Herder. Says Erickson, “Since it’s so easy to find and choose apps, we can take risks and try out different apps for different skills.”

As the district adjusts to its all-day kindergarten schedule, teachers are confident they’re meeting the promise to help even the youngest learners get ready for years of productive classroom time. “We’re giving students power and choices when we let them learn on their own,” Erickson says. “It not only helps us meet everyone’s needs individually, but it makes learning fun.”

