

Carroll School helps students overcome learning disabilities with Google for Education



About Carroll School

- Private school
- Serves 400+ students
- Located in Lincoln and Waltham, Massachusetts
- [Website](#)

What they wanted to do

- Update ageing and hard to manage Windows technology
- Find an affordable solution that is easy for young children to use

What they did

- Launched [Google Apps for Education](#), [Classroom](#), and [Chromebooks](#)

What they accomplished

- Increased educational access for students with language-based disabilities by making it easier for them to read, write and collaborate with teachers
- Empowered students to succeed by giving them a way to access instant feedback and support from teachers
- Reduced the maintenance, time and costs of managing technology at a private school



Background

[Carroll School](#) is located in Lincoln and Waltham, Massachusetts, and was founded in 1967 by a group of neurologists who wanted to help children with language-based disabilities, like dyslexia, succeed and thrive in learning environments. Today, with over 400 students, 150 teachers, and 50 staff members, Carroll School is dedicated to empowering students to become confident, lifelong learners.

Challenge

Margaret Kuzmicz, director of technology at Carroll School, wanted to give students access to technology that inspired them to learn, rather than discouraging them. Unfortunately, the Windows devices the school had at the time were clunky, slow, and difficult for students to use. Further, the frequent technical issues related to their Windows environment made it a challenge for the IT team to maintain. “Managing a Windows environment had many challenges, to the point where I needed to hire temps in order to get the devices ready each year,” says Kuzmicz. Since many students with language-based disabilities struggle with traditional reading and writing strategies, Carroll School wanted to provide intuitive technology that would help their students excel in the classroom. In thinking of a better solution for their students, the school realized that touchscreen devices would be easier for all to use, especially for their youngest students.

Solution

In 2014, Kuzmicz partnered with multiple departments within the school, including both the Administration and the Cognitive Intervention and Research teams, to find a solution that would best fit Carroll School’s unique needs. “We chose [Google Apps for Education](#), [touchscreen] [Chromebooks](#), and [Google Classroom](#) because they deliver the type of experience that our students need and deserve,” says Kuzmicz. All students now use touchscreen Chromebooks in the classroom for their day to day work, as well as for testing. Chromebooks have been so popular that this year, the faculty at Carroll School is piloting 40 devices of their own with a plan to eventually have all 100 teachers using Chromebooks in the classroom.

Benefits

Increasing educational access for students with language-based disabilities
Carroll School relies on cognitive testing software to assess student progress. Students originally used Windows tablets to take tests, but the lag time was so poor that the test results, which measure how fast a student responds to a question, were rarely on par with how fast a student could actually respond. The old technology, therefore, was harming students’ test performance. Today, the touchscreens on the Chromebooks make it easy for students to instantly respond to questions on a cognitive test, eliminative lag time completely.



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— Margaret Kuzmicz, director of technology at Carroll School

“With Google Apps, students are in continual and often live contact with their teacher and other students. This connection helps students become more productive because they are able to overcome obstacles that would’ve previously left them without support.”
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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 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 has become a resource for Carroll School,” says Kuzmicz. Chrome add-ons improve students’ learning experiences even more: Google **Read & Write**, for example, allows students both to hear words that they select read aloud, and to dictate writing assignments into written form in a Google Doc. Tools like this give students with language-based disabilities a new opportunity to engage with learning material, one that isn’t available with other platforms.

Empowering students to succeed with real-time support

Students with language-based disabilities experience more difficulty with schoolwork than the average student. “This puts them at risk for becoming discouraged with school even though many of our students are incredibly smart and creative,” Kuzmicz says. **Google Docs** has helped Carroll School students overcome this issue. Today, students can complete an assignment in Google Docs, share it with their teacher, and get instant feedback, which makes them feel more supported and confident in their abilities.

Students also regularly practice communication and writing skills with **Gmail**, Classroom, and Docs, sharing their work and leaving comments for their teachers and fellow classmates. “They’re in continual, and often live, contact with their teacher and other students. This connection helps students become more productive because they are able to overcome obstacles that would’ve previously left them paralyzed, without support,” says Kuzmicz.

Reducing maintenance, support time, and costs

By switching to Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks, Carroll School saves money on both the base cost and ongoing management of the technology. With these savings, the school is able to provide more financial aid to students in need, a result they view as a key benefit of going Google.

“Google Apps for Education is a major conduit for communication, collaboration and productivity between teachers and students.”
— Todd Bearson, project based learning department head and faculty member

“Google has also completely changed the lives of the tech support staff here at Carroll School. Our help desk tickets have been reduced by about 1/3 compared to the previous year,” says Kuzmicz. The school was able to distribute 200 Chromebooks over 3 days without hiring any additional help — something that never would have been possible in the past. Carroll School also no longer pays for email and file servers, as Google takes care of that traditionally expensive and time consuming piece of the puzzle offsite.

Teachers at Carroll School are dedicated to helping their students enjoy learning, and feel confident in the classroom. Google Apps for Education and touchscreen Chromebooks have made that process so much easier. “It’s a major conduit for communication, collaboration and productivity between teachers and students,” says Todd Bearson, project based learning department head and faculty member.