



About Fontbonne Hall Academys

- <http://lakecatholic.org>
- Private college preparatory high school
- Serves 815 students
- Located in Mentor, Ohio

What they wanted to do

- Allow students and teachers to communicate beyond the classroom
- Help students to apply creating thinking to lessons

What they did

- In 2014, Lake Catholic began using Google Apps and Classroom; teachers received Chromebooks
- In 2015, every student received a Chromebook

What they accomplished

- Accelerated student participation in classrooms and online
- Created an organized, easy-to-access place for teachers and students to work on projects
- Improved assessment testing that helps guide changes in teaching



Lake Catholic High School inspires creative thinking by students and teachers

Organization

Lake Catholic High School, located in the Cleveland suburb of Mentor, Ohio, is home to 815 students in grades 9 to 12. Lake Catholic strives to foster core values in students, such as commitment to excellence, compassion, and a willingness to provide service to the community.

Challenge

The limitations of the traditional classroom were getting in the way of creative teaching and learning at Lake Catholic – for example, allowing students to work in groups and learn on their own. “Teachers also wanted to communicate more with students, and work from home or outside of class,” explains Taylor Smith, the school’s technology coordinator. “They wanted to edit students’ work and provide feedback online, or give them assignments on days when school closed because of bad weather.”

When Smith arrived in 2013, the school had limited wifi connectivity, and was getting by with just a couple of computer labs housing about 60 outdated computers. “We might as well have been in the Bronze Age – we had very primitive technology,” Smith says.

School leaders suggested adding more computer labs, or allowing students to bring in their own devices if they had them. “Then we decided, why not just give every kid the same device?” Smith says. He and a team of teachers, consultants, and staff members predicted that higher student engagement in classroom and self-directed learning would be the likely outcome.

Solution

Instead of pursuing a BYOD policy, which Smith worried might not work considering probable inconsistencies in the quality and type of device used, school leaders wanted to buy laptops for every student. Smith worried the cost would be prohibitive: “We didn’t have enough state funding to cover the entire cost – the purchase had to come out of the school budget and we didn’t want to raise tuition to do it.”

Google [Chromebooks](#) were affordable, so Smith opted to buy 65 of them for teachers at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, giving them time to get familiar with the devices. At the same time, he signed up students and teachers for [Google Apps for Education](#).

During this transition year, Smith and other staff members beefed up the wifi network, developed policy guides, and worked closely with teachers to train them how to use Google Apps in the classroom. “Adoption had to start at the top down,” Smith says. “We taught teachers what they’d need to teach the students.” Kids also had time to get familiar with Google Apps, using the tools on the school’s PCs and their home devices.

With the groundwork in place, Lake Catholic made the big leap to 1:1 in the fall of 2015, outfitting every student with a Chromebook. Smith encouraged teachers to ease tools into lessons gradually if they needed to. Thanks to the transition period, however, “they jumped right into Google, especially [Classroom](#),” Smith says.

“Giving students an assignment of this depth wouldn’t be possible without our devices. They push students to think at different levels – everything from problem solving to creative thinking.”

— Debbie Scheer, teacher, Lake Catholic High School

“The No. 1 change I hear from teachers is that student engagement has increased. Students who don’t normally raise their hands in class will ask questions when they’re away from campus.”

— Taylor Smith, technology coordinator, Lake 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.

Benefits

Better organization helps students focus on learning

[Google Classroom](#) helps teachers centralize class assignments in the same place where they offer feedback to students and gather responses. “Classroom has become a discussion forum, where students can ask questions 24/7 and teachers can answer,” Smith says.

Easy creation and storage of assignments helps everyone prepare for unexpected school closures. “All teachers add three ‘calamity day’ lessons to Classroom, so they’re ready in case of closures,” Smith says. “Students know to look in Classroom if they are home from school.”

Google Drive keeps homework and background materials at everyone’s fingertips. “Kids no longer lose classwork like they did with paper,” Smith says. “With our old PCs, the folder structure was so complicated that students couldn’t find documents. Now they can easily search by keywords, or set up folders in a way that makes sense for them.”

Fast, easy testing highlights learning and comprehension

“We’re using Google Forms to give teachers immediate feedback on class topics, so they can adjust lessons accordingly,” Smith says. He uses the Chromebook management console to lock devices for a specific class so that students can only view the assessment test, and can’t access the Internet during that time. “Digital testing lets teachers know right away who understands the lessons and who doesn’t,” he says.

Smith also got speedy replies when he emailed students a Google Forms survey asking their opinion of Google Apps and Chromebooks. “First of all, I got 250 responses in five minutes – that would never happen with a paper survey,” Smith says. “And the good news was the responses were overwhelmingly positive.”

Students are inspired to create and participate

Now that students can easily connect with teachers, they’re more likely to take part in conversations. “The No. 1 change I hear from teachers is that student engagement has increased,” Smith says. “Students who don’t normally raise their hands in class will ask questions when they’re away from campus.”

Alicia Paradise, who teaches Spanish in grades 9 through 11, uses Chromebooks to improve students’ comprehension and confidence. “I used to play listening activities on a desktop computer, and students would submit their answers through a Google Doc,” says Paradise. “But when students couldn’t hear the lesson well, they’d become frustrated. Now I can use the ‘Share to Classroom’ Chrome extension to send a link directly to Chromebooks, allowing students to take their time replaying the recording and adjusting the volume.”

English teachers Debbie Scheer and Anna Bobby asked their 11th grade students to research the historical background of Mark Twain’s books and submit class presentations with their findings. Using the tools at their fingertips, students went above and beyond what was asked of them: Not only did they use Google Slides to create designs for postcards featuring Twain pictures and famous quotes sourced on Google, they also used Google Maps to build illustrated maps of Huckleberry Finn’s journey down the Mississippi.

“Giving students assignments that take them in so many directions wouldn’t be possible without our devices,” Scheer says. “It pushes students to think at different levels – everything from problem solving to creative thinking.”

