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The Ultimate Google Apps for Education Migration Kit

Featuring tips, best practices and customizable templates for adoption, training, and change management tips for a school's GAFE implementation

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Introduction

As an educator, you've no doubt noticed this phenomenon: students are creatures of habit, tending to sit in the same seat from the first day of class or eating at the same lunch table day after day.

Why is that?

It's because people resist change. More precisely, they're comfortable doing what they've always done. Any deviation, even the smallest kind, causes angst. When you're talking about a major change, like a switch to Google Apps for Education (GAFE for short), the stress – and resistance – will be that much greater.

Schools around the world are quickly adopting Google Apps for Education because they realize how much it improves collaboration among teachers, students, and administrators. They understand the benefits of early student introduction to this advanced cloud-based technology. But adapting to the change can be difficult for many people.

We're here to help. Ensuring the success of your GAFE installation may be challenging, but it's far from impossible. It takes planning, nurturing, and good old-fashioned hard work. But the results, improved communication and efficiency, are well worth it in the end.

So roll up your sleeves and get ready to work. We have some educating to do!

1. Setting the Stage

Sometimes the hardest part of a process is to begin, especially when embarking on a major change like a Google Apps for Education implementation. Most people are set in their ways and getting them to adapt to something new can be difficult.

An article in the *Harvard Business Review* presented ten reasons people resist change. The list included these three motives that are particularly relevant when making a significant move like a change to Google Apps for Education.

- Fear of the unknown

- Stress due to lack of preparation

- Resentment of additional work

These are all legitimate human reactions, but they don't have to stand in the way of your successful implementation. With a well thought-out plan that includes orientation, training, and ongoing communication, you can overcome these objections.

"When we first began this journey, I spent a lot of time listening to people's fears and questions," says Kate Fahey, Instructional Technology Specialist and Google Educational Trainer in greater Chicago. "If I could alleviate them, I would. If I couldn't, I was honest with them. Once I built that relationship, they trusted me to lead them in the right direction."

Open and honest communications is the key to getting off on the right foot.

It Starts from the Top

Any new initiative needs the backing of the leaders in the institution, and that's certainly the case with Google Apps for Education.

"We had the full support of the college's senior management team," relates James Kieft, UK-based Group Learning and Development Manager at Activate Learning. "Their own buy-in and wide ranging use of Google Apps helped to reinforce the importance they attached to it."

What's In It for Me?

No matter how attractive or beneficial the change appears, the success of Google Apps migration will ultimately come down to each individual wanting to know how their daily working environment will be impacted. And if you want individuals to become adopters, you're going to have to show them how *they* will benefit from using Google Apps.
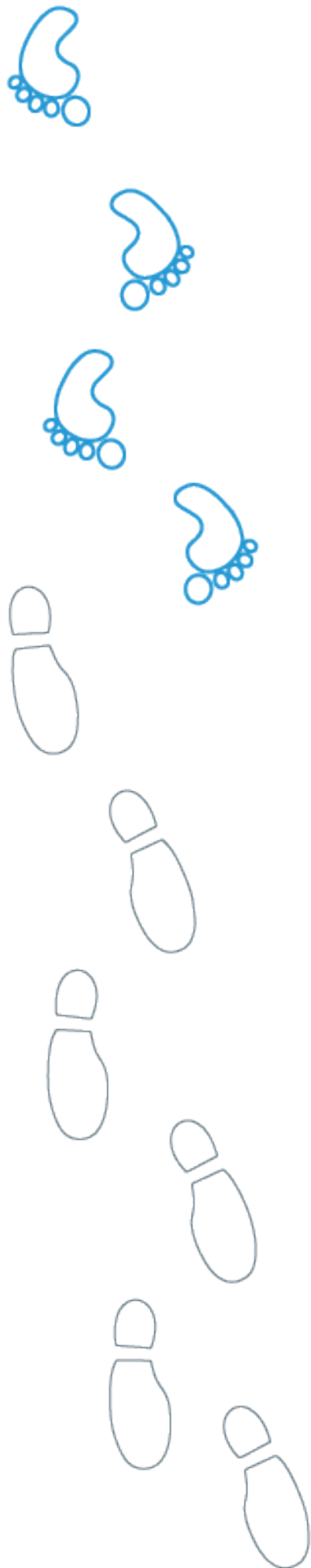
"We initially met with our technology advisory committee made up of teachers, administrators, and IT staff," said David Andrade, K-12 Education Strategist. "I started putting information together explaining why we chose Google Apps for Education and the benefits to using it."

"We focused on Google Drive and showed staff how they could work collaboratively on files simultaneously with colleagues and students," says Kieft. "We relate tasks we are carrying out in training sessions with some aspect of teaching and learning to help staff see its relevance as well as opportunities for use."

First Impressions are Key

"Configuring Google Apps for Education correctly is absolutely imperative," stresses Peter Henrie, Google and Edtech Consultant and founder of Virginia-based Amplified IT. "The service does not come configured for a school environment – it's a business application that is given free to schools. Because of that, the defaults are the same for business and education. Going through each setting within the Admin console and deciding how it will affect the staff and students is crucial."

"Communications with staff before moving to Google Apps is key," Henrie goes on. "Let them know it's coming and what to expect once it comes. As an example, many of the staff already had personal Google accounts registered with their school domain address. They needed to choose whether to create a new personal Google account or migrate their data into the new Google Apps for Education domain. Telling users about these issues and what to do before they happen is critical."

The kickoff and early stages of the implementations are crucial. Work hard to allay fears and to prepare people for the change.

2. Take Small Steps

Managing change all at once can be daunting. It's sometimes best to start small and expand from there. Keep it simple. You want to present the entire plan to everybody at the school, but you don't want to bury them with detail. Take it in small steps.

Whet Their Appetite

"We spent the summer before implementation migrating emails so that everything was there when we started," says Dean Stokes, a Google for Education Certified Innovator and Trainer. "We did a short presentation to staff about the benefits of the move. We set up stations where the idea was to feed the staff small chunks. We didn't want to overwhelm them."

"We started the project with a small scale trial, with just certain departments using it with their students," relates Kieft. "This proved successful with other teams asking to become part of the trial on hearing the positive feedback from those initial teams."

"We let the staff know that they had Google accounts and focused our initial training on Google Drive," says Fahey. "We 'forced' them into using Drive to store and share documentation needed for their evaluation process. This ensured that everyone at least logged in and was able to upload documents and create basic documents. Beyond that, we allowed the teachers to explore on their own without formal communication. As teachers explored Google Drive, they immediately began to think of ways to use it with their students. I worked directly with those teachers and their students to begin sharing and creating documents. It was a very grassroots approach and it spread at an incredible rate."

Work Your Plan

Google recommends a communication plan consisting of a series of emails that provides information and aims to build support over time. A sample communication plan could look like this (examples of all these items are available in the *Messaging Samples* section at the end of this document):

- **Announcement email** – Lets everyone know about the school's plan to switch email and calendar platform

- **Intranet announcement** – Broadcasts the school's plan to convert to Google Apps

- **Email to recruit super users** – This is a call to teachers and administrators to nominate people they think will be able to work with peers during the transition; known as *Google Guides*, these individuals are crucial to the success of the change effort

- **Training email** – Announces the schedule for live, online training

- **Google posters** – Customized posters with information about the transition; these could be posted in common areas like the teacher room or lounge for example

- **First switch notification** – Lets users know when their accounts will be migrated to Google Apps

- **Switch reminder** – General reminders about the account migration

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- **Switch reminder with preparation** – Tells folks what steps they need to take

- **Final switch reminder** – Final reminder about migration with instructions to print out documentation

- **Welcome message** – Sent to migrated users, includes information about what to do first and where to get help

- **Tips and tricks messages** – Weekly email highlighting a new tip or trick related to Google Apps

- **New user welcome message** – Welcomes new teachers to their Google Apps accounts

Slow and Steady

Some organizations choose to initially migrate only email and calendars rather than starting with a full-blown transition. This could be an effective way to ease into the change.

"The whole suite of apps was available from day one, but we only trained staff on Gmail to begin with," says Stokes. "People have to log in to check their email so it's an easy process to move from that point."

"We initially rolled out Google Drive and this got staff used to the idea of a browser being something that could be used for more than just surfing the net," says Kieft.

"We rolled out all of Google Apps to everyone right at the beginning but didn't force anyone to use it initially," says Andrade. "We then started migrating users away from their network drives to Google Drive without any real issues."

There are many different ways to implement Google Apps and you should tailor your approach based on your knowledge of your staff.

However, introducing the program in small bites has proven to be most effective.

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3. Get Involved

Training is important, but hands-on learning can be just as effective as classroom instruction. Let people experiment and get into the apps. You need a combination of both to get people prepared for the change.

"There's something about Google Apps that makes you want to explore," says Stokes. "Like when someone uses an iPhone or a Mac for the first time. There's no manual included but it's so much fun to find out the cool little extra features yourself."

Use the Tools

There are a number of other training strategies to implement that will help make the transition go smoothly. One of those is using Google Apps as part of the Google Apps training program.

"When launching Apps, the focus is on how they can support or enhance teaching and learning," says Kieft. "With Hangouts, for example, I did a number of Hangouts on Air where I talked to different staff about how they were using technology in the classroom. This leading by example has worked in helping staff identify how apps could benefit their own teaching."

"Following Gmail training at the beginning of the term, I sent out a Google Form via email," Stokes says. "It's simple and asks staff to rate themselves as a beginner, intermediate, or advanced user. This was key, because it meant that when the training came along they felt comfortable in their surroundings with people of a similar skill set. For the more advanced users it meant that they didn't have to sit and get bored because what we were doing was too simple. They were also having their first experience of using a Google Form without realizing it. This was intentional because it's such a good tool for schools!"

"To demonstrate their features, we used Sites to create a site which we used to host all of the videos and guides that we created using the various Google Apps," says Kieft.

James Kieft recommends using Google "Add Ons", which can be found in both Google sheets and Google Docs. "Add Ons provide extra functionality, with useful features such as, clip art, a thesaurus, bibliography creator, and a mail merge facility to mention just a few."

Kieft recommends Add Ons for staff who are moving over from using MS Office. "These additional features may be a useful way of helping them to transition, as it returns some of the functions that appear in MS office."

Train As You Go
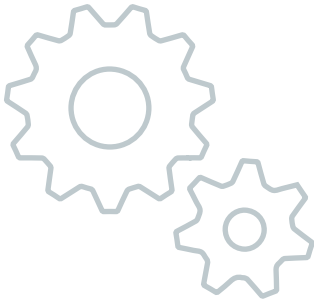
"I'm a huge fan of just-in-time training," says Fahey. "When we were rolling out Google Drive to our teachers, we met with departments and focused on the specific task, such as updating a document. I supplemented the department trainings with individual teacher sessions as needed. I also go into the classroom and co-teach with my teachers when they need that extra assistance. My door is always open for quick questions or longer, scheduled sessions with teachers and small groups."

"We have run half-hour bite-sized sessions focusing on a particular aspect of Google Apps," says Kieft. "For example, how to create a Site, adding buttons to a site, creating a Google Form, and reviewing responses."

Enable Self Training

Another effective addition to an implementation program is to create a training website. This is a great way to promote all the training content you've developed. Add videos where people can brush up on the basics. This is a good place to add a training calendar where users can click on a particular training course, get information about it, and sign up. Add a link to your home page to drive traffic to the training site.

"I created a resource website with how-to's, tips, resources, and more," says Andrade. "We then sent an email to staff explaining everything and how it would work."

Email can also be an effective vehicle for training. "I send out a 'Friday Tech Tips' email that highlights new features in Google Apps," says Fahey. "I email individuals and groups with new announcements from Google or feature releases," says Stokes.

"Once Google Apps is up and running, I try to keep it in the forefront of people's minds by providing Tips of the Week on how to use tools like Chrome and the other services," says Henrie. "You can create a demo slam contest and ask teachers to come up with three minute showcases on time savers/cool tweaks or tools and get them to show off at meetings."

"We used a combination of Google Sites, Docs, Sheets, Drawing, and Calendars to advertise training sessions and share resources with staff," says Kieft. "This had two benefits: one, it highlighted to staff the functionality of Google Apps. Secondly, it provided ideas on the possible ways Google Apps could be used."

The easier you make it for people to get in and experiment, the faster they will learn and the more successful your transition will be.

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4. Communicate Relentlessly

Keep your implementation alive by continuously communicating with everyone involved. That's the most effective way to keep it fresh and give it the best chance to succeed.

Google Guides Are Key

One of the keys to the success of a Google Apps implementation is to develop a core group of committed Google Guides. These are specially selected people – many times volunteers – who will serve as your in-the-trenches ambassadors, counselors, advocates, trainers, and front line of support. Many users will be apprehensive about the change and will need live, hands-on help no matter how much training and documentation you provide.

This is where the Guides can be indispensable. They are transitioned to Google Apps earlier than most of the users and given extra product training and support. This is an especially effective program because users are usually more productive with the new product if they can get immediate, one-on-one help from a peer. Google Guides understand the user's needs – because they walk in the same shoes – and can provide more targeted, efficient, and personal support.

This also reduces the workload on the IT group, which will have its hands full in the early going with system support and troubleshooting issues.

"Find interested teachers who are pushing ahead with the technology," says Henrie. "Turn them into your Google Ninjas who can provide training to other staff who haven't quite caught up yet."

Power up Peers

The Guides benefit from the program as well. Through the extensive training and support of the new services, they'll gain a high level of proficiency quickly. This is an ideal role for those who like to be "power users." They'll get the opportunity to help their co-workers and demonstrate leadership within their teams.

As the transition proceeds, there will be another group of users who emerge. They will be the early adopters who will become additional advocates for the conversion. These folks are to be nurtured and encouraged. The more users who get on board, the faster your implementation will flourish.

"We've run training sessions by the learning technology team and by experienced academic staff," says Kieft. "The advantage of having

academic staff running sessions is that they add an element of credibility. They also invoke feelings of 'if they can do it, so can I.'"

"I relied on my more experienced, enthusiastic teachers to help those who were struggling," says Fahey. "They would talk to them or show them what they had already done and that had a huge impact."

There are many ways to spread the word. Using the Google Apps tools is a great way to communicate and demonstrate their effectiveness at the same time.

5. Stamp out Negativity

No matter how well you prepare, there are always going to be issues with your transition to Google Apps. Some people will seize on those issues to reinforce doubts and resistance to your implementation. The key is not to let those small missteps derail your program. Don't give in to the negativity.

Show the Value

"I think it's best not to directly address negativity," says Stokes. "Obviously you need to answer questions, but it's much better to spend as much time as possible with those people, guiding them through different features so that they end up seeing for themselves how good this stuff is."

"The key is providing proper training that doesn't just show how to use the basics of Google Apps for Education, but how to actually integrate it into the curriculum," says Henrie. "Administrative staff are regularly resistant to the switch, but showing them Google Forms and how it can save many steps on gathering data can turn a non-believer into a dedicated follower within minutes."

Keep On Talking

Fahey says that ongoing training and communication is the most effective way to overcome resistance.

"I am in constant contact with the teachers via email, department meetings, district meetings, quick questions in the hallway, brainstorming sessions, co-teaching, and many other avenues," says Fahey. "Some of the most eager teachers were the most inexperienced, yet some of the negative ones were already using technology in a meaningful way. For some, it was as simple as sharing a Google Doc with their students for the first time."

Eliminating the fear of new technology is also beneficial.

"Sitting beside them while they explore is intrinsically more motivating as they begin to realize that the scary online things are much less scary and much more helpful than they originally thought," says Stokes.

You are always going to have naysayers. Information and communication are the best ways to win them over.

6. Share Successes

Once your implementation is in full swing, there will be pockets of success. Don't miss an opportunity to share those moments. Proof of success is the most effective catalyst for further growth.

Google stresses the importance of celebrating success and recognizing everyone for making it happen. You have to note the achievements of your team and user community. Google suggests a number of ways to accomplish this:

- Have your executive sponsor send a message describing the success of the deployment. Explain the progress made toward achieving the project goals.

- Recognize the contributions of your project team and the Google Guides through email or a post on the intranet.

- Reward users who have embraced Google Apps. You can set up a contest to come up with the most innovative new uses of Google Apps.

- Reinforce your Google Apps vision. Reuse your original marketing campaign by tying it to the successes achieved.

Fahey relates a success story that highlights the benefits that Google Apps provides.

"One of our initial Chromebooks/Google Apps pilot programs involved a teacher we'll call Jenny," she said. "Jenny didn't ask to be part of the pilot. She inherited a class that was already slated for the pilot and was *not* happy about it. She didn't want anything to do with the Chromebooks. Fast forward that school year and she was begging our director to let her keep the Chromebooks for her next year's class."

Andrade has also seen a high-level of acceptance.
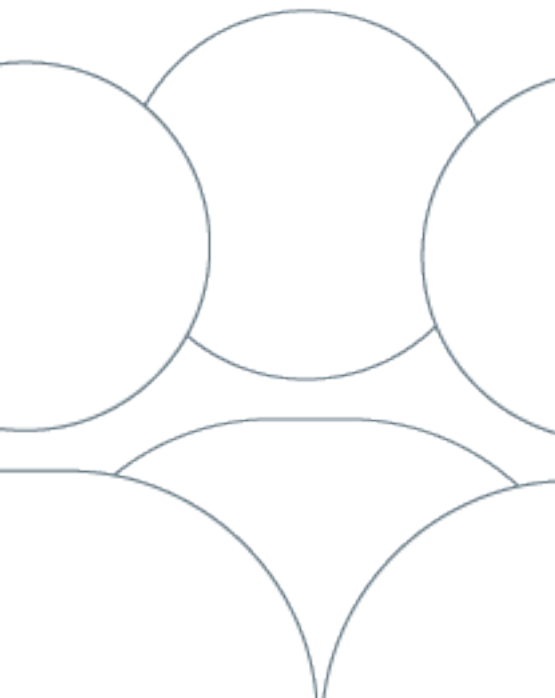
"Teachers are reporting increased student engagement and learning and they love that they can have their students do research, more projects and work collaboratively," he says. "Staff is also using Google Docs to create collaborative documents for teams and curriculum planning. Students with special needs are getting additional support and resources through Google Apps and we haven't had any issues."

"Over the years it's become easier and easier to deploy Google Apps for Education," says Henrie. "At this point, teachers and students are both crying out to use Google Apps."

Stokes is seeing the same kind of response.

"I think the whole thing has been a success," he says. "As a school, we must have saved thousands of hours by using Google Apps. That doesn't mean we have less staff now, it just means that people now have a more balanced workload and can be more productive."

"The main thing though," Stokes sums up, "is if I were to tell the staff I was turning off Google Apps tomorrow, I think they'd tell me I was crazy and it's the worst decision I could ever make. They'd maybe even start a petition! That says it all."

Sharing these kinds of individual and group success stories and company-wide productivity improvements are effective ways to build support for the program. People seeing that it's easier to perform their daily functions and to collaborate with co-workers will go a long way to encourage adoption

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Conclusion

So now the hard work has paid off. The early resistance and negativity has melted away and your implementation is now flourishing. There were times when you didn't think you could pull it off, but you never gave up and the results are worth it. Your organization is now bursting with new ideas and more people are enjoying the benefits every day.

Despite your success, you can never take your Google Apps implementation for granted. You need to continue to manage and nourish it. Left alone, it can easily fall by the wayside. The benefits are too great for you to let that happen so stay vigilant.

Most of all, keep learning, keep teaching, and keep *Going Google!*

PDF Downloads

Messaging Samples

Announcement Email Sample

Intranet Announcement Sample

Email To Recruit Super Users Sample

Training Email Samples

Training Email Sample: Gmail

Training Email Sample: Google Drive

Training Email Sample: Google Docs

Training Email Sample: Google Sheets

Training Email Sample: Google Slides

Training Email Sample: Google Forms

Training Email Sample: Google Calendar

Training Email Sample: Google Hangouts

Google Posters Samples

Google Apps is Coming Poster Sample

Google Guides Recruiting Poster Sample

Switch Notification Email Samples

First Switch Notification Sample

Switch Reminder Sample

Switch Reminder with Preparation Sample

Final Switch Reminder Sample

Messaging Sample

Welcome Message Sample

Tips and Tricks Message Samples

Tips and Tricks Email: Create a Public Calendar

Tips and Tricks Email: Search Gmail with Operators

Tips and Tricks Email: Create Bookmarks in Google Docs

Tips and Tricks Email: Create Appointment Slots in Google Calendar

Tips and Tricks Email: Build a Grading Rubric in Google Forms

Messaging Sample

New User Welcome Message Sample

Our Experts

James Kieft

James Kieft is Group Learning and Development manager at Activate Learning, which has a number of College's in the UK with campuses at Reading, Oxford,and Banbury. In 2011, he took on the role of Learning Technology Manager, where he oversaw the move away from a traditional VLE to using Google plus communities, Google sites and other web based apps, which he promotes via his blog. He was joint runner up in the ALT Learning Technologist of the Year Award in September 2014.

David Andrade

David Andrade, MS Ed., is a K-12 Education Strategist and Google Apps/ Chromebooks specialist on the education strategy team for CDW·G, a leading provider of technology solutions and services to education, government and healthcare. A former engineer, educator, EdTech Specialist and School District CIO, Andrade works with school districts to assist them with selecting and implementing technology solutions to help them improve teaching and learning.

Kate Fahey

Kate Fahey is an Instructional Technology Specialist at Lockport Township High School District 205, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. Kate is also a Google Education Trainer who develops and delivers training on all things Google Apps. Kate's district has recently gone 1:1 with Chromebooks, so she has experience in all aspects of deploying, managing, and training on Google Apps. Her main focus is working with teachers on ways to use the tools in a classroom to enhance student learning.

Dean Stokes

Dean Stokes is a Google for Education Certified Innovator and Trainer as well as a Google Certified Administrator. He currently works as the Learning Technologies Manager for a secondary school in Essex, UK whilst providing support and training on a freelance basis to schools on their Google Apps for Education journey. You can find out more on his blog or follow him on Google+ or Twitter.

Peter Henrie

Peter Henrie is one of the founding members of Amplified IT, an education-focused Google Apps consultancy group with an approach that focuses on empowering schools and districts. Working with a large number of schools and districts has enabled Amplified IT to tailor best practices for the deployment of Google Apps to each school's unique environment. Since 2008, Amplified IT has assisted hundreds of educational institutions both in the US and worldwide to successfully adopt Google Apps and Chromebooks through technical training and their unique GAFE Audit process.