Google for Education

RN Podar School imparts future skills with Google Apps for Education

At a Glance

What they wanted to do
- Improve interaction inside and outside the classroom
- Deliver learning despite unplanned interruptions
- Prepare students to use future technology

What they did
- Transitioned to Google Apps for Education, which students, parents, and teachers use to collaborate and share materials

What they achieved
- Raised students' productivity and engagement
- Dramatically elevated learning levels
- Imparted important 21st-century skills

About R.N. Podar School
- Private CBSE school based in Mumbai
- Recognized as Ashoka Changemaker school
- Serves 3000 students and 150 teachers
- www.rnpodarschool.com

Background

The R.N. Podar School is ranked among the top schools in India for academic performance and innovative practices. Located in one of the most heavily populated areas of Mumbai, it has large classes in multiple locations. The 150 teachers work in two back-to-back shifts to accommodate all 3,000 students in Grades 1 through 12.

Challenge

A shift in India's education policy in 2010 and the introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) greatly increased teachers' workloads and required more collaboration and documentation. Educators needed a technology solution because they couldn't efficiently meet CCE requirements through a traditional approach. "We have always been open to new initiatives," says Principal Avnita Bir. "We started to look for new ways of doing things."

Solution

R.N. Podar adopted Google Apps for Education in 2011. "We found it easy to use," Avnita says. "It also helped us build the brand of our school. We felt as though Google Apps had been designed after mapping the daily requirements of teachers and students." The school now has 6,000 Google Apps for Education accounts, for every teacher, staff member, and students. Although they initially adopted the solution for CCE, teachers soon discovered that Google Apps for Education also delivered exciting possibilities for teaching and learning.

Benefits

Higher-order learning

R.N. Podar teachers use the entire suite of Google Apps tools for teaching various classes and subjects. Primary school teachers, for example, use Google Slides to share content with their students (and their parents), because the classes don't use textbooks.

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—Avnita Bir, Principal, R.N. Podar School, Mumbai

Thanks to Google Apps, a teacher can now share material in advance to help students prepare, then collaborate and discuss with them during class using Google Apps. "The teacher can engage the child in higher-order discussions and problem solving," Avnita says. "This has benefitted our children hugely, because now we're able to share the content with them outside the classroom."

Continued learning despite unplanned holidays

"We have sudden rain holidays in Mumbai," Avnita explains. "We cannot afford to miss classes, so we use Google Apps for Education very, very effectively."

Even when school is canceled, teachers can use Hangouts and other Google Apps tools to share lessons with students, and students can continue learning from the comfort of their homes—all with just a computer and an internet connection.

"It really helps that Google Drive, Google Classroom, etc., are available across devices," Avnita says. "Students are more likely to browse content on their phones and tablets than to switch on a desktop computer."

Develops communication and collaboration skills

Google Apps for Education brought students, teachers, and parents together on the same platform. Teachers now use Google Classroom in all primary and secondary classes to give assignments, manage lessons, and interact on topics. "Students are often responding to a shared video or an interesting question, and they feel they want to respond," Avnita says.

The effects of Google Apps for Education are evident in R.N. Podar's primary and secondary schools alike. A Standard 1 class, for instance, collaborated with a Standard 2 class in studying human shelters around the world. One class studied housing structures in Greenland, and the other, tents in the arid Indian state of Rajasthan. Then together they delivered using Google Hangouts.

Standard 12 students produced an annual program called Drishtikon, which in previous years had been a stage event. But now with Google Hangouts, students could present their program both to parents and to guests watching 1,000 kilometres away in Bengaluru. The event helped students to effectively present online, an important skill for their later working lives.

Results

"Google Apps for Education became a way of life here, and the excitement of learning new ways to do things became contagious," Avnita says. "We transformed from a school that students trusted into a school that trusted its students." In the classrooms, the time that students now spend with their teachers "has become much more productive and engaging, which has improved students' learning tremendously."

R.N. Podar now hopes to use Google Apps for Education to collaborate with scores of other Podar schools all around India. "Technology skills are critical for the 21st century," Avnita says. "Google Apps helps us bring technology to students early, so they will be empowered in the future."