

Google Docs: A Communication Innovation

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What does the technology really do?

One struggle within the classroom, not to mention the school, is finding an efficient way to disseminate information in an efficient way. The last thing that people want to do is feel that their time has been wasted. Teachers are increasingly busy and their time is valuable, and there are alternatives to the traditional memo or documents passed from person-to-person. In addition, teachers want to allow the chance for their students to collaborate – with each other and with students outside of their own classroom. *Google Documents*, more commonly referred to as *Google Docs*, is “an easy-to-use online word processor, spreadsheet and presentation editor” that allows the user the opportunity to “create, store and share instantly and securely, and collaborate online in real time” (*Google*, 2010). When using *Google Docs*, the user has the chance to communicate with others and work together on spreadsheets, presentations, documents, forms, etc.

What specific and necessary problem will this piece of technology solve?

Teachers have tried to utilize journals as a way for students to communicate and create collaborative documents. More often than not, this creates a contrived document with little cohesion between students. Additionally, using traditional methods make it difficult to collaborate with students outside of the classroom or school. The internet provides the opportunity to communicate with people across the county, state, nation, and world. With *Google Docs*, teachers have the chance to extend the classroom outside of the confines from the four walls. An additional benefit to using *Google Docs* is that it truly reinforces the idea of “writing as a process and encourages multiple revisions and peer editing” (*Google*, 2010). A feature exists within *Google Docs* that permits the user the ability to retrieve everything as it was before an edit has taken place. This allows the teacher the option of looking back at original drafts and the editing done within the document before it reaches its final draft status. The teacher can also see who has added what to the document. As cited on *Google for Educators*

(2010), teachers have used *Google Docs* in many ways to engage students in the discussion and presentations.

Teachers can also use *Google Docs*, not only as a way to improve their classrooms, but as a way to improve their professional productivity. Within my own school, we are required to complete weekly grade and behavior reports on the student athletes. The coaches view this document and use it as a tool for helping their students to be the best that they can be. Before the use of the *Google Doc*, teachers passed notebooks around to each other. This created numerous issues – one teacher would hold on to them and the grade level would miss their deadline, the coach would forget to give the notebooks to the athletic director, etc. An initial solution was to create a spreadsheet and place it on the local network drive. However, there were many difficulties – not being able to access from home, more than one person could not view the document simultaneously, etc. Finally, the documents were uploaded as a *Google Doc*, and the communication between the teachers and coaches has been very successful.

What cheaper/better/easier/simpler technology already exists to solve your problem, and, in what way, is the proposed innovation an improvement over other options or the existing way of doing things?

While there are alternatives to the use of *Google Docs* – paper and pencil, emails, traditional memos, placing documents on the local network drives – there are many drawbacks to the use of each of these options. The use of *Google Docs* is an excellent solution to improving productivity among teachers. One of the outstanding qualities of *Google Docs* is that it requires no additional costs to use. There is nothing to download, and it uses the existing technology. Many innovations in the school require costly programs or up-to-date technology. As long as the computers within the school have internet capabilities, uploading documents through *Google Docs* is possible. An additional benefit to using *Google Docs* is that all documents are stored online and can be accessed from anywhere, offering the user a unique level of convenience. This was one of the benefits to our use of *Google Docs* for the athletic

grade reports. Since the documents were stored online, the teachers could access the report form home or school, allowing the teacher the chance to complete the task when it is most convenient. An additional benefit to the *Google Docs* is that they allow users to access them simultaneously. The editors of the *Google Doc* can each access and modify the document in real time. This offers a unique ability for teachers to use the documents as an option for communication and collaboration.

Google Docs offer numerous benefits for teachers. From giving their students the chance to collaborate with their peers across the country to giving students a new perspective on the fluid nature of writing, there are many opportunities for students to enhance their learning through *Google Docs*. Teachers can communicate with their students via *Google Docs* and provide feedback to their projects, writings, presentations, etc. The students can then use this information to improve their creations. Teachers can also utilize *Google Docs* as a tool for improving their efficiency. *Google Docs* can allow teachers the chance to upload and access the documents from anywhere with internet capabilities. *Google Docs* give users the opportunity for real-time modification and an option for collaboration among their peers. As teachers and administrators continue to implement various *Google Docs*, they can see an improvement in their productivity and effectiveness.

References

Google for educators. (2010). Retrieved October 19, 2010, from http://www.google.com/educators/p_docs.html.