

Academy for Careers in Television and Film unifies school community and increases operational efficiency with Google Apps



At a Glance

What they wanted to do:

- Provide staff and students with tools to support communication and teamwork
- Streamline teacher/parent communication with easy access to student logs
- Operate school at high efficiency with automated request and procurement tracking & accountability

What they did:

- Launched Google Apps to simplify collaboration and centralize student information for teachers
- Established forms in Google Docs as the standard way to manage a wide range of inputs and records, allowing easy, “always-on” access

What they accomplished:

- Improved student attendance by 2% over previous year with centralized conduct and intervention logs
- Increased visibility and tracking into operational activities school-wide

Organization

The Academy for Careers in Television & Film is a New York City Public High School whose mission is to prepare students for employment opportunities in film and television production – an industry that generates more than \$5 billion and supports an estimated 100,000 jobs in New York City each year. The school partners with a wide range of production related businesses and organizations representing a cross section of the industry including New York’s major studios, top producers and directors, and unions. Through these partnerships, students benefit from unparalleled opportunities to work alongside industry professionals and gain experience to support their career and academic aspirations. To provide personalized support, the school hosts an ambitious advisory program, in which coaches and advocates maintain close contact with students and families.



Challenge

Mark Dunetz, principal of the Academy for Careers in Television & Film (ACTvF), set out to create a specialized educational institution, working from the ground up and with limited staff. Using Google Docs in the earliest planning stages, he began to think of ways that online, collaborative documents could boost school efficiency and teamwork. He wanted a system that let authorized users share work and records and log things like phone calls or conference schedules – and access information wherever and whenever they worked. He also wanted to let students monitor progress and input on projects, and to keep a lasting repository of their ongoing work. His experience with traditional desktop software had never allowed this flexibility, but with Google Apps, he saw new possibilities.

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—Mark Dunetz, Principal, Academy for Careers in Film and Television

Solution

Dunetz started with organizing information and administration. Using Forms in Google Docs – part of the Google Apps suite – he built conduct logs that let teachers easily submit information into a spreadsheet tracking student performance and activities. The ACTvF team liked the results so much that they built an array of other “better ways,” including logs to record cumulative lateness, forms tracking tutoring and extracurricular programs, and spreadsheets collecting notes and progress reports. Before long, teachers brought students into the process, capturing their personal goals and ongoing updates on work. These

About Google Apps Education Edition

Google Apps Education Edition is a free suite of hosted communication and collaboration applications designed for schools and universities. Google Apps includes Gmail (webmail services), Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Docs (online document, spreadsheet, presentation, and form creation and sharing), Google Video (secure and private video sharing – 10GB free) and Google Sites (team website creation with videos, images, gadgets and documents integration), as well as administrative tools, customer support, and access to APIs to integrate Google Apps with existing IT systems.

For more information visit:

www.google.com/a/edu

“Teachers can now easily contact parents or family about problems and opportunities, knowing that their information is current and in one easy-to-find place: online.”

—Mark Dunetz, Principal, Academy for Careers in Film and Television

documents, all securely stored online for easy access, ensured that teachers were prepared with accurate, up-to-date details for parent conferences, staff meetings, student evaluations, and process improvement across the school.

Site operations came next. “We built spreadsheets in Google Docs to manage inventory, contact information for parents, staff, and school partners, and for the creation of course outlines. Forms make it easy to collect input, communicate updates, and capture information automatically in a spreadsheet,” says Dunetz. Soon, agendas, minutes, and meeting attendance were all being stored online, giving staff members a way to see a chronology of activities, progress, timelines, and more. Procurement requests, expense/reimbursement tracking, and records of custodial work, technical support, building use, and supplies followed suit, all managed with Forms.

Results

The capabilities that Google Apps have enabled for ACTvF have been “nothing short of revolutionary,” says Dunetz. “We’re seeing benefits on all sides thanks to Google Apps. Our team can do ten times as much and be ten times as responsive. The ability to create and track all kinds of notes or requests, and have records that are accessible whenever we want them, wherever we work, is amazing.”

Dunetz sees this progress as only the beginning. He plans to move to a paperless model where all writing projects will be done directly in Google Docs. “The implications are huge,” he notes. “Teachers will have an ongoing record of written work and student work habits. This will help us address the priorities of writing instruction from grade to grade.”

With the use of Google Docs, students will create digital portfolios and share their work with their teachers and across the school. File names will begin with course codes, allowing easy sorting, and all faculty members and collaborative teams will have viewing access. This will allow all the right people to quickly view every major piece of writing along with revision histories and comments, greatly enhancing support for student writing.

Finally, Dunetz is transferring lesson plans, unit plans, syllabi, and related materials to Google Docs; new curricular documents and lesson plans will be created directly in the platform using pre-built templates. A separate Google Calendar for school-wide advisory activities will list each day’s lesson as an event with plans and resources attached to the calendar items. On the administration side, Google Calendar is already simplifying scheduling of faculty meetings and the use of shared resources such as laptop carts and projectors.

Communication with parents has markedly improved. Now, when teachers talk with parents, information about the student is easily accessible, tracking previously recorded incidents, conversations, or prior student records. Dunetz explains, “Teachers use Google Docs to record interactions with a family, significant conversations with students, as well as anecdotal descriptions of student behavior. Faculty members check logs prior to making calls home or scheduling conferences. This has fostered regular, accurate communication between home and school and has translated into attendance rates that are among the highest in the New York City public school system. In fact, our 9th graders have improved their attendance rate by 2% from their previous academic year. This is a result of the efficiencies we’ve created using Google Apps.”

