Google for Education

Keep students focused on learning with Class tools



Background

A core tenant of Google for Education's product philosophy is building with our users, not just for them. We actively partner with school districts to integrate authentic customer feedback throughout our product development lifecycle. This collaboration is essential for refining new features and beta products to ensure they meet the practical needs of teachers and students from day one of their launch.

Below is a summary from a few of our Trusted Tester schools who partnered with the Google for Education team to trial our new Class tools feature. **Help shape the future of our products. Sign up to pilot Google for Education tools or participate in user experience research.**

About the Contributors

Michael Steinberg, Assistant Director for Technology at Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake, a public school district in New York which includes three elementary schools, one middle school, and a high school and serves over 3,000 students.

Kyle Brumbaugh, Director of Technology at Berryessa Union School District (BUSD), a public school district in north San Jose, which includes 13 schools ranging from elementary to middle school and serves over 6,000 students.

How Two Districts are Gaining an Edge with Class Tools

Schools know that deep learning blossoms from strong engagement between students and teachers. In classrooms that offer devices for every student, the challenge becomes guiding each student towards focused, meaningful work. This is particularly true for teachers wanting to keep their students focused on tasks at hand, supporting students who are new to the language of instruction, and for IT departments who want an easy way to better support their classrooms with better instructional and learning tools.

Faced with these common classroom dynamics, schools are increasingly turning to digital management solutions. Class tools is designed to enhance student engagement and time management, helping learning to flow without distractions. Class tools is available on managed Chromebooks for everyone in the classroom, including teachers, with a Google Workspace for Education Plus license.

We recently heard from technology leaders across two school districts who, as part of Google for Education's trusted tester program, have been piloting Class tools.

These districts had adopted Chromebook Plus ahead of participating in the trusted tester program for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to:

1. **Improved support and troubleshooting:** When teachers use Chromebook Plus, they're using a laptop that runs the same operating system as their students' devices - just built to meet the needs of teachers, and as a result are better equipped to understand and troubleshoot student device issues.
2. **Simplified IT management:** Managing a fleet of Chromebooks and Chromebook Plus across all students, teachers, and staff means being able to manage all of these devices through the same Google Admin Console. This simplifies deployment, app management, and security protocols.
3. **AI-powered features:** Chromebook Plus includes exclusive, AI-powered tools that can be a game-changer for teacher productivity. Chromebook Plus specific Gemini powered features like Help me write assists in writing tasks like drafting emails and creating lesson plan outlines, while Help me read can save time by providing quick summaries and enable interaction with content.

They shared their early experiences and excitement, highlighting a significant positive impact on teachers and students alike. Here's a look at how these schools are already benefiting.



Help Students Stay Focused

Teachers need tools to manage student attention in a digital learning environment. Class tools is designed to allow teachers to guide their students' online learning journey by sending specific webpages and assignments they'd like students to focus on directly to their devices. Plus, with the ability to focus students on only the resources they've distributed, teachers can easily minimize distractions and keep classes on task.

The district leaders shared that the ability to focus students on a teacher's specified resource (for example Wikipedia or Google Classroom) and restricting access to non-related content on students' screens has been incredibly helpful to keep students on track with their learning. When sharing content, teachers can ensure a more secure and focused learning environment by configuring student devices into explore, focus, or locked mode. Each mode adjusts how far students can navigate from the provided resources.

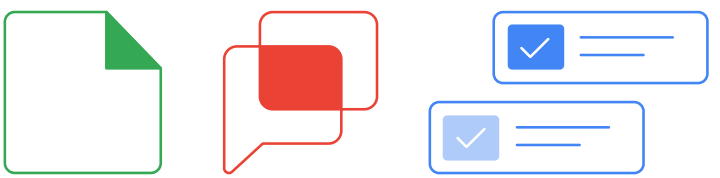


Live Captions in Any Language

With Class tools, students can see live captions of what teachers are saying in real-time, right on their screens, and instantly translate them into their language of choice. The leaders highlighted this as a powerful tool for their English Language Learner (ELL) students, particularly in helping students follow along in their language of choice. This feature is also helpful in schools with dual language programs, as it can make it easier for the teacher to facilitate learning across both languages.

Kyle Brumbaugh shared a story from a teacher whose students were able to read lessons in their primary languages, like Mandarin or Vietnamese. Kyle said, "Our district is fortunate to have a wealth of diversity, with students speaking Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and numerous other languages. Although we lack the resources to provide instruction in every student's native tongue, it was a mind-blowing experience to see them instantly translate content into their primary language on their Chromebooks"

They also provide teachers with the ability to review lessons via the captions in real-time, offering a method for self-reflection on their delivery.



> We found Focus sessions, which allow teachers to restrict browsing to specific tabs, very valuable for keeping students on task."
>
> **Michael Steinberg**
> Assistant Director for Technology,
> Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

> Although we lack the resources to provide instruction in every student's native tongue, it was a mind-blowing experience to see them instantly translate content into their primary language on their Chromebooks."
>
> **Kyle Brumbaugh**
> Director of Technology,
> Berryessa Union School District



Sharing Screens and Guiding Users

The technology leaders also expressed teachers' appreciation for the screen-sharing function. Class tools let teachers share their screen with students, and importantly, display a student's screen for the whole class or on a larger display. This can be a real confidence-booster, especially for younger students who might feel a bit shy about sharing their work. Students can present right from their Chromebooks, which may help calm the nerves for those not quite ready for the front-of-class spotlight, while still showcasing their awesome work.

> Performance anxiety is common in younger students. Class tools allow them to share their work from their seats, rather than the front of the class, reducing this fear of all eyes being on them. They can explain their work confidently, like a 'teacher from the rear', without the anxiety of a formal presentation."
>
> **Kyle Brumbaugh**
> Director of Technology,
> Berryessa Union School District

Keeping an Eye on Progress

When it comes to personalized support, screen monitoring gives teachers real-time visibility into students' screens, offering insight into their current work. Students are given a warning before a teacher views their screen to protect their right to privacy. It is a simple tool that can drive outsized impact for teachers and learners.

> Screen monitoring enables teachers to manage classroom behavior or provide support with fewer disruptions to the class."
>
> **Kyle Brumbaugh**
> Director of Technology,
> Berryessa Union School District

So Easy to Use and Fits Right In!

One of the best parts? Class tools is designed to be easy to implement, manage, and fit right into the existing Chromebook tech setup. From a management standpoint, Steinberg found rolling out these tools remarkably straightforward, needing very little configuration – a huge bonus for busy tech departments. Michael Steinberg found that pushing out Class tools was simple thanks to its seamless integration with Google Classroom, cutting out extra steps. By simply configuring teachers in students with the appropriate Class tools policy in the Admin console, the features can be accessed on ChromeOS M137.

A Common Thread

Looking at the experiences across different school districts, a common theme shines through: Class tools provide versatile solutions that truly enhance what teachers can do within their existing ChromeOS environments. From boosting support for English language learners to giving teachers more effective ways to manage digital activities and keep students focused, the benefits are clear.

The stories from BUSD and BH-BL paint a promising picture of how thoughtful technology can empower both teachers and learners, helping to create classroom environments that are more accessible, engaging, and productive for everyone involved.

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