How SMPN 12 Satarmese keeps students excited to learn with Google for Education

School at a glance

SMPN 12 Satarmese is a public middle school located in Paka, Satarmese, in the Manggarai district, a rural area of the East Nusa Tenggara province. There are 347 students enrolled in the school, as well as 15 teachers and staff.

Background

Not long after distance learning began in early 2020, the school received 15 Chromebooks from the Ministry of Education (MOE), all of which are managed by Chrome Education Upgrade (CEU). CEU equips IT administrators with access to advanced security measures to safeguard school data, enable easy and flexible logins, as well as manage login restrictions to ensure school devices are only used for schoolwork. Students and teachers were also given access to Google Workspace for Education via MOE's official education digital platform, belajar.id.

Challenge

Limited access to technology and lack of experience in delivering online lessons made it difficult for the school to fully support online learning after distance learning was implemented. Knowing that learning had to carry on anyway, teachers had no choice but to continue photocopying learning materials, which students had to then manually collect from school every week. Unfortunately, many students lived far away from school — some even hours away. Many became reluctant to travel the long distance just to collect their paper-based, photocopied learning materials.

This manual system of learning also significantly reduced interaction between students and teachers. As students could not directly consult their teachers when they had questions or problems, many began to lose their interest in learning.

"Many students grew so unmotivated to continue learning that some even decided to pause their studies completely and return only once the pandemic was over," said Vice Principal and Science Teacher Veronicus Cornelis Apolos Littik, also known as Mr. Veron by his students.

With most teachers unfamiliar with technology, and students lacking access to devices at home to tune in to school, the school eventually made the difficult decision to stop operations temporarily until they could find a new way to teach and learn. It became clear then that the practical aspects of distance learning needed to be drastically improved.

Solution

At the end of 2020, Mr. Veron attended the Google Certified Educator training, where he learned how to maximise the Chromebooks that the school received from MOE. This was the turning point. Knowing how useful the training was, Mr. Veron encouraged other teachers to become Google Certified Educators as well. Once teachers became familiar with Chromebooks, the school was able to harness Google for Education's tools to improve the limited interaction that teachers and students previously struggled with. In so doing, the school reignited student interest in learning, and eventually reopened in mid-2021.

Empowering teachers to teach effectively
To encourage teachers to make better use of their Chromebooks, Mr. Veron began conducting online and in-person trainings at school. He taught his fellow teachers how to use the Chromebooks, set up their Google accounts through belajar.id, and make use of the different Google for Education tools and features to help with their lessons.

"Teachers were pessimistic about online learning at first," he said. "But I told them that if we approached this with a positive attitude and opened ourselves up to learning this technology, we'd be able to do this."

Mr. Veron taught 10 of his fellow teachers. Collectively, they then managed to activate nearly 400 belajar.id accounts for both teachers and students in the school, which then allowed them access to Google Workspace for Education. He also encouraged the surrounding schools to adopt the technology, training 20 schools and more than 200 teachers in the surrounding districts.

Making education accessible to all

When SMPN 12 Satarmese reopened in mid-2021, it shifted to a new system of blended learning, which combines both online and offline learning. Students now return to school in limited numbers, while the rest remain at home.

Instead of travelling all the way to school to receive their photocopied learning materials, students can now easily access their learning materials online on Google Classroom. With Google Classroom available on mobile devices, students now use their phones to take photos of their assignments to upload online. In the same vein, teachers are able to use Google Classroom on any device to give assignment feedback and grade tests, allowing both teachers and students to stay connected no matter the device or distance.

To overcome the previous lack of direct teacher-student interaction, students now use Google Chat to reach out directly to their teachers with their questions. The ability to consult teachers online, in real-time, has helped significantly in keeping students interested from home.

Meanwhile, students take turns using the Chromebooks available at the school for learning. For students who are new to typing on keyboards, Chromebook's Voice Typing feature allows them to use speech to enter text. This helps students, no matter their familiarity with technology, to adapt to the school's new blended learning system.

Greater connectivity for greater learning

Beyond increasing access to education, Google for Education also helps to ensure uninterrupted learning.

For instance, power outages, which sometimes occur in the area, can be very disruptive for classes. When this happens, teachers find Chromebook's long battery life, which can last up to a day, especially helpful in keeping classes going.

Even when disconnected, students can still access their materials offline, using Google Workspace for Education's offline mode. Any changes made offline will then be automatically synced when connection is restored.

> " Even students living in remote areas can be successful in reaching their dreams if we help each other use the resources available to ensure that children are educated."

Veronicus Cornelis Apolos Littik,
Vice Principal & Science Teacher,
SMPN 12 Satarmese

Keeping classes exciting

To make learning more fun, collaborative and easy to understand, Mr. Veron introduced Google Jamboard to his online lessons on Google Meet, as well as his in-person classes.

"I like using Jamboard because it's fun, the lessons are easier to catch, and we can also draw and write while having a discussion there," said Evarita Arnas Dawus, one of Mr. Veron's 9th grade students.

"Ever since using Google Workspace for Education, our students have become more excited, and they even encourage their friends to return to school," said Mr. Veron. "Now, our students go to school not just to get a certificate. They also really enjoy this new learning process."

Summary

Despite the initial obstacles, SMPN 12 Satarmese became the first school in the vicinity to successfully implement a new learning system anchored on Google for Education. This earned it the attention of many other schools in the region.

With the help of training by Mr. Veron and his fellow teachers from SMPN 12 Satarmese, more teachers are using Google for Education to renew student excitement to learn and return to school, especially in SMPN 12 Satarmese.

Today, student attendance has increased by 40%. Mr. Veron firmly believes that implementing Google for Education in school has and will continue to help his students become more independent learners, as well as foster more honesty, creativity, and responsibility for one's own education.

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> This [technology] would have an important role [to play] in the future. Not just for academics, but also for students to develop honesty, independence, and responsibility over their own education."
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> **Veronicus Cornelis Apolos Littik,**
> Vice Principal & Science Teacher, SMPN 12 Satarmese

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