



Empowering Educators Using Google Apps

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

Location: Somerset County,
New Jersey

Number of Schools: 9

Total Student Enrollment:
approx. 7,400

**Grade-Level Use of Teacher
Dashboard:** K-12

NEEDS MET

- > More consistency
- > Better teacher time management
- > Efficiency in use of Internet and Google Docs

AT A GLANCE

Students and Teachers in Hillsborough Township Schools of New Jersey have made a successful transition to a digital workflow; reaping the benefits of enhanced collaboration, augmented creative opportunities, ongoing feedback loops, all in an increasingly paperless environment. With Google Apps for Education as their platform, Chromebooks as their hardware solution, and Hapara tools as an essential instructional application, Hillsborough teachers facilitate the digital work of students in a way that is consistent from class to class, saving them file management time, and enabling them to deliver on the promise of a 21st century education.

CASE STUDY:

Hillsborough Teachers Save Time and Make Student Learning Visible with Chromebooks, Google Apps and Hapara Teacher Dashboard

Located an hour's drive west of New York City, Hillsborough Township Schools rest squarely in the heart of Somerset County, New Jersey. The township's public schools—of which there are six elementary, one intermediate, one middle, and one high school—offer a superior education to approximately 7,400 students. The academic quality of the Hillsborough schools is accentuated by the presence of several major corporations and institutions of higher learning in the area surrounding the township itself. Exxon Mobil, Johnson & Johnson, Rutgers University, and Princeton are but a few of the Hillsborough Township Public Schools' close neighbors.

The Challenge

Notwithstanding rigorous curricula in all subject areas, 1:1 student computing, and 750 highly skilled and innovative teachers, Hillsborough Township Public Schools faced many of the difficulties that hinder similarly high-achieving districts across the country. According to Joel Handler, the director of technology, inconsistency in how teachers managed their students and class loads formed a major hurdle. Too much time was being wasted, Handler recalls, as teachers struggled to organize student work, haphazardly applying a variety of techniques for creating and sorting old-fashioned paper folders. The fact that each teacher had his or her own idiosyncratic "system" translated into time-consuming inefficiency and a disjointed student learning experience.

Handler notes that the most problematic time wasters occurred at the beginning of each school year. Weeks, not days, were squandered as individual teachers struggled to create and implement organizational structures that absorbed precious class time, time that could have been devoted to student learning and to discerning student needs.

The Solution

Having been introduced to Teacher Dashboard at a New Jersey Summit featuring Google Apps, Handler realized that Hapara's Teacher Dashboard represented an invaluable "tool that actually saves teachers time and makes life easier," as Handler put it. Within a short time, over half of the Hillsborough teachers were using Teacher Dashboard. And teacher use covered an exceptionally wide range of target areas—teacher-student collaboration, individualized instruction, differentiation, and content delivery. Hillsborough has the talent and experience in a staff that has been supporting students in achieving high outcomes for decades. Prior to the

DASHBOARD TEACHERS

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I love the dashboard—I have found it especially useful to see what my kids are doing when they are in class and it is lovely to be able to close them out of translation services when they should be using their own brains. I love that the kids can very easily put files in one place and I don't have to hunt around to find them ... additionally, it can function as a portfolio for them."

—Ellen Weller, Teacher

"Love it! This feature saves so much time in both sending students documents and going into their folders to find/comment/grade. I have also started using Interact to see what they are working on in class ..."

—Patricia Sellar, Teacher

introduction of Teacher Dashboard, what they did not have was the proper tools to bring the full force of that talent and experience to the digital workflow.

Not surprisingly, the positive feedback began to roll in almost immediately. "Love it!" remarked one teacher. Teacher Dashboard "has revolutionized my classroom management of documents," raved another. Most importantly, for many of the township's teachers, the Interact function, also offered by Hapara, allowed them to oversee student work more effectively, more efficiently, and more readily than ever before. No longer were teachers faced with the nearly insurmountable task of physically keeping dozens of Internet-surfing students on track and on task. Rather, as one relieved teacher noted, Interact made it possible to monitor the Internet presence of an entire class all at once and, in doing so, kept "the kids more focused, as they knew I [was] watching over them more closely."

Another interesting finding was that teachers found the effective learning time each day was expanded. An example of this was made visible when the recent winter closed school for a record number of days, teachers found that with Google Apps, Chromebooks, and Hapara tools, Hillsborough lost less valuable instruction time than it might have otherwise. Teachers and students could continue some of their work, even when they could not physically in the same place at the same time.

The Capabilities

As the Hillsborough Township Public Schools move into the future, Teacher Dashboard is poised to accompany them on the journey, continuing to smooth the path toward even higher achievement and better student outcomes. Now in their second full year of using Google Apps with Chromebooks and Hapara tools, nearly all of Hillsborough's teachers have made the digital transition. Teachers are using Hapara tools to "push out" assignments, track student progress, collaborate on student writing projects, routinely communicate with students, and enforce healthy norms of technology use within the classroom. Hapara tools will also be employed in an ongoing effort to move toward a paperless learning environment. Hillsborough now regularly hosts visitors from the tri state area, who are interested in replicating Hillsborough's success.

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