BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

Author: Al Lovelace and Rekha Singh

Title of Project: *Effective techniques to support the successful integration of Google Apps for Education*.

Year: 2013-14

School/Grade: K-5 Technology

SUMMARY OF *INVESTIGATORS OF PRACTICE* ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Context:

As Building Technology Consultants in grades K-5, our role in the district is to support administrators, faculty, staff and students in effectively implementing new and ongoing technology initiatives. The role of a Building Technology Consultant is multi-faceted in that each of us provides many opportunities for large group and one-to-one training experiences for teachers and staff members. We work closely with classroom teachers to integrate meaningful and current technology practices that will enhance the classroom curriculum.

This year is the first of a multi-year district wide roll out of Google Apps for Education which has opened up the byramhills.net domain (in addition to the existing byramhills.org domain). All members of the Byram Hills community will need to become proficient users of the Google suite of products. As Building Technology Consultants, we need to determine how to best support our community members in this initiative by identifying resources, materials, and strategies for implementation.

Action Plan:

Knowing that we would be supporting the roll out of Google Apps for Education, we identified the following research question:

How can the Building Technology Consultants best support teachers in Google implementation?

a. What are the most effective resources to share with teachers?
b. What is the value of Google as a collaborative tool?

To begin answering this question, we started exploring the Internet for articles and resources related to Google Apps for Education. However, during our November IOP Meeting, we were encouraged to change the focus of our study from the original plan (Google Apps for Education). The new research question would focus on cloud-based computing and looking at the foundational differences between a cloud-based and a networked environment in an elementary lab setting. After a cursory review of resources and data, as well as conversations with regional contacts, we realized that our cloud-based computing plan would be difficult to research. There was limited data since no such program existed in this area (yet). Over the course of the next month and with the approval of our IOP Facilitators, we decided to go back to our original plan and focus on Google Apps for Education.

The next step of our research was to identify those effective techniques which would support successful integration of the Google suite of products in the district wide implementation of Google Apps for Education and the establishment of the byramhills.net domain.

We were able to find many web based resources that would support the Google Apps for Education roll out. Many of these web based resources demonstrated techniques that we could put into practice. These include:

- Google Apps Training Resources: https://sites.google.com/site/appstrainingresources/home
- Google For Education: http://www.google.com/edu/training/tools/
- Google Gooru: http://www.googlegooru.com/
- Rolling Out Google Apps for Education: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftdjbmTYHgE
- Google for Education You Tube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/eduatgoogle?feature=watch
- Synergyse Training

We participated in a number of different learning opportunities including:

- Google for All: User Group Meeting for Newbies, Rabid Fans, Skeptics, and the Curious @ LHRIC (12/13/13)
- NY/NJ Google Summit @ Kean University (03/14/14)
- LHRIC Tech Expo 2014 @ Edith Macy Conference Center (04/14/14)

We participated in the following webinars:

- Google Admin Training Week (Webinar)
    - Google Apps Admin Console and Google Apps Script (4/22)
    - Google Drive and Managing Google Apps (4/23)
    - Google Sites and Mobile Device Management (4/24)

We created materials for training our faculty and staff to introduce Google Drive and Gmail (using Google Presentations). Additionally, we used Google Forms to collect related data from our faculty and staff. This helped us to familiarize ourselves with the Google Apps, as well as demonstrate how to effectively use them to collaborate with our faculty and staff.

Results:

We learned that supporting a major roll out of a new initiative requires careful planning, collaboration, and a plan of action that would support users of many ability levels. We found an unlimited supply of rich resources available on the Internet that we can use to support the implementation of Google. Of particular value to us was participating in live workshops and conferences. This gave us the opportunity to speak to others who had already implemented so we could hear first hand of successes and challenges.

Some of the challenges include:

- Device management in a 1:1 deployment
- Apps selection and management in a 1:1 environment
- Building critical mass of stakeholders (administrators, faculty, and students) in a new initiative

Some of the successes include:

- Transition to new devices
- Demonstration of student work samples to show effective use of new technology (moving from Enhancement to Transformation in the SAMR model)
- Community support behind implementation
- Increased collaboration between colleagues and teachers and students

We conducted several small and large group Google trainings for our faculty and staff. In these trainings, we presented an introduction to Google Apps for Education with a focus on Google Drive, how to manage Gmail settings, and the fundamental differences between traditional email and Gmail. With the different skill levels of our users, we realized that it is more manageable when the groups are small and the topic is narrow. With smaller groups, we were able to address individual needs, of which there were many. We have also learned that multiple training sessions will be needed to ensure that our faculty, staff, and building administration are comfortable with using Google Apps for Education.

Implications:

Our action research project offered us the opportunity to learn many new things about implementing Google Apps for Education. We learned that there is an abundance of resources available to support the Byram Hills roll out of Google Apps for Education. Using the Internet to research similar implementations and to find training materials provided us with a framework we could follow as well as resources to use with our faculty and staff. Participating in webinars allowed us to learn from experts on how to manage a Google Apps for Education roll out. Participating in conferences and workshops gave us the opportunity to hear first hand from others who have already completed or are transitioning to Google Apps for Education. As more school districts come on board, we will continue to seek out new information and share our own experiences, perhaps using Google+. Additionally, our own Byram Hills community will determine our next steps as we listen and respond to their needs.

- We will continue to support our faculty and staff, utilizing the resources available on the Internet and high quality self-created training materials.
- Our next major step in the roll out process is to conduct “Google Academy” during Byram Hills Cyber Camp.
- Early next fall, we will schedule professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to continue the momentum of the Google Apps for Education implementation.
- We will continue to attend workshops and participate in training sessions that will allow us to gather resources to share with our colleagues. Additionally, this

provides us with networking opportunities with other professionals who are having similar experiences.

- Next year we will begin to support our student learners in Google Apps for Education so that we can begin to see the classroom implications of the implementation.