

Hacking Google Apps For High School Organization

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

I am in my first year as the principal of Michigan City High School. MCHS is a diverse population with approximately 1,700 students. Daily entering the office various pieces of information are delivered and in several formats. The information is important and needs to be filed and easily accessible.

The issue with all of the information coming in, is there was no level of organization and a common practice in the office for organizing the information. Secretaries were still filing in filing cabinets, some were administrators were filing on their desktops, and some were mixed between google docs, filing cabinets and using their desktop. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to unify all main office incoming and outgoing information to be organized by using google docs.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if I developed a better understanding of google apps (team drive) would that help me organize the systems and stakeholder teams working as a whole.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, I began surveying my administrative team, secretaries, counselors and building leadership team about how information was organized and how they felt about the organization. After surveying and questioning about the organization, some felt it would be nice to have items better organized and thought google docs would be a great solution. Others were afraid of the technology and not sure that would be the best fit. It was clear that if google docs were going to be used we needed to do some training.

Before I began fully implementing google docs, I first felt it best to complete my own organization into google docs. I decided to have my secretary send all information to me that arrived in paper form, to have it scanned in. I then could convert into google docs. As I reorganized my documents, I then started to scan all documents to file into google. After I completed my filing in google, I surveyed my administrative team to get their feedback on how they felt the organizational process was going. My administrator that is strong in technology really liked the process, and felt it was streamlining information and making it easier to access. The other administrators liked it, but did not feel strongly about it. After further conversations, they do not feel adequate accessing google docs. In talking with my secretary, this is a major shift in thinking. She has been filing papers for years, she is excited to learn a new system, but needs the professional development and support to make it happen.

Looking at the data from the surveys and the conversations with the administrative team, secretaries, counselors and building leadership team, it is a process that everyone felt needed to happen. The data collecting process was over the course of about 12 weeks. Data was collected at the beginning of the project, half-way through and at the end of the project. Data was collected as interviews and surveys. The concluding

survey indicated that google docs is a good tool to use for organization, however we know change is hard, but with the right supports they are all willing to work towards the common goal of organization through google docs.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, important things I learned include: 1) Everyone wants to have a common organization practice 2) To incorporate a transition the right supports have to be put in place 3) Google docs/ Team drive have increased information efficiency in the high school office.

Everyone wants to have a common organization practice.

As I took over as the head principal at Michigan City High School, I witnessed information entering and leaving the office in multiple formats. I personally did not feel organized with these processes. As I spoke with out administrative team and secretaries about the multiple formats they too felt organized.

I then began to research and work with my IPLI team to search out a method that would work for our system. Google docs/ team drive meets every facet of need and it is free and our district already uses google, google classroom etc. I began using google docs for all meetings, all paper items are scanned into google docs. After interviewing secretaries, building leadership team, and administrative team, all of them like the organization and enjoy we are all using the same system.

To incorporate a transition the right supports have to be put in place.

Through the process of transitioning to google docs, all secretaries were concerned because they needed more training on google docs. Not all stake holders felt confident with the system. The data from a survey shows 25% do not feel more organized. When questioned about this, the response was because they did not feel adequately trained in using google docs.

Google docs/ Team drive have increased information efficiency in the high school office.

Now all information is coming in to the office as a digital format and stored in google docs and team drive. The habit of continually converting or asking for files in digital format has increased this efficiency. 50% of the administrative team feels the office information is more efficient using google docs. The lead secretary takes all minutes in google docs, which is then distributed to all department chairs. We are still in the process of providing the professional development necessary to fully incorporate this organization through out the staff. According to Bredeson (2000), " the most important responsibility of every educator (leader) is to provide the conditions under which people's learning curves go off the chart." Which tells us the importance of professional development and the quality of the professional development that needs to take place.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

This action research project has been challenging and enlightening at the same time. I have had the opportunity to reflect and see needs with in myself and office, that if adjusted will benefit not only myself, but the entire team. I have learned that I need organization around me to be able to accomplish tasks in a timely manner. Not only do I need the organization, but our building leadership team has appreciated the organization. I have also learned that our teachers appreciate the transparency from the principal in regards to this process.

As I continue through this process of learning, there have been changes made regarding how I move forward with rolling out new ideas and programs. I learned that if I am going to make a change, not only do staff and administration need supports, they need to be in the forefront during the decision making process. As we continue moving forward with google docs at the high school, I wonder if the district went to this format of google docs and team drive it would help the efficiency of the total system?

In conclusion, this self reflecting action research project has been enlightening to me as a leader. It has taught me about my preference for organization, but it has also allowed me to reflect on other aspects of my leadership. It is important to understand your staff and how to move everyone forward, and making teacher leaders part of the process is key. According to Barth (2001), "within the right culture of a school and a strong self-confident principal who is willing to share some of his or her power, there is a potential for teachers to become a serious force in local school policy" . Teachers helped to build the climate and culture and lead the instruction in the classroom. This was a key take away for me in this action research project.

References:

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