

## Google Apps For Education

For those of you who have school-aged children or grandchildren in grades 6, 7, 8, or High School, you might be familiar with Google Apps For Education (GAFE) and Chromebooks (the small laptops used with GAFE). For the rest of us, here is a short summary of what this revolutionary education platform is. And even if you don't know any school-aged kids, you may be interested anyway, because everything that works for school kids also happens to work for individual users too.

First, let's not dive into hardware discussions: Google Apps is not about hardware. It is all about a software platform that has email, documents, spreadsheets, presentations and online storage delivered via a browser, such as Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, Opera, etc. That to me is the classic definition of a "Cloud" application we all hear about: nothing to install, nothing to configure, just sign up for a Google email account, and you are done. That is the #1 reason GAFE is becoming the dominant education platform: it provides everything a school needs to give students software tools and a place to store their documents... for FREE. That's also a good reason for individuals to use Google Apps too: same benefits as schools have.

The #2 reason GAFE is perfect for schools: the workflow and tracking is a blessing for teachers: they can create homework and study assignments, provide links to websites, assign due dates, and collect the homework without touching one piece of paper. Teachers can also see who turned homework in on time, and how long the student spent doing the homework. Gone are the days of "my dog ate the homework", or more modern excuses like "I lost my flash disk". And if little Johnny says he spent 3 hours doing homework, but the GAFE logs say 15 minutes, then little Johnny has some explaining to do. Even better, students can access all their stuff at home just as easily as at school... on any device: it can be any computer, even a smartphone.

The #3 reason is where we bring in the hardware part of the story: you can get a cheap Chromebook with software and online management for about \$175-\$225. Try to get a decent computer with all the basic software you need from anywhere else for that price. Schools simply cannot afford the far more expensive Microsoft or Apple way of doing things anymore, and that is why the education market is moving – to Google.

**Is GAFE perfect? No.** There are some annoyances, and I wonder how long Google can afford to provide all this great stuff at no charge to schools. But in the present day, there is simply no better education platform than GAFE. Want to know more? Here is a [link to the Full Article on InfoWorld.com](#).

-John Becker

**Even More:** If you have an old laptop that still works but is out of date, you could convert it to a Chromebook by using some free software. [Here's an article about how to do it](#). You'll also need a Gmail account to try out the online documents and software, but basic browsing does not require anything beyond an internet connection.