

# 21st Century Learning Spaces

## *Reimagining Teaching and Learning in a Digital Age*

Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) 2014–2016 Strategic Technology Plan articulates a vision of anywhere, anytime access to learning for staff and students. In alignment with this vision, MCPS has initiated a multiyear effort to provide all students with access to mobile computers and a cloud-based learning platform that will enhance creativity and collaboration in the classroom.

The *21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Spaces* initiative focuses on transforming classroom communities through the integration of mobile, cloud-based, and collaborative technologies paired with technology-enriched, learner-centered teaching practices. To achieve the plan's core objectives of anywhere, anytime access to learning, schools will leverage a variety of mobile devices including Chromebooks and the power of the *Google Apps for Education* to promote and foster effective communication and collaboration between students and staff to create connected classrooms.



During the 2014-2015 school year, students in Grades 3, 5, and 6, as well as those in high school social studies classes, will begin using these technologies in the classroom. This initiative will continue to expand in the following years.

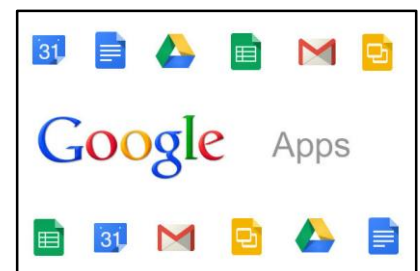
### **How does learning look different in 21st century learning spaces?**

This project is grounded in our vision that **ALL** students are empowered and prepared to participate as full citizens in a dynamic global society in which they **create, achieve, engage, contribute, and flourish** in meaningful communities through universal access to people, information, and ideas. The *21st Century Learning Spaces* initiative seeks to cultivate and nurture classroom communities where:

- students are reflective, resourceful, and engaged problem solvers working together; and where students confidently engage in complex authentic tasks;
- digital curricular resources offer students multiple opportunities to integrate challenging content, represented through different mediums including text, video, audio, graphic, and multimedia formats;
- technology supports disciplined inquiry and making students' thinking visible as they make sense of complex and real-world phenomena;
- there are ambitious expectations for all students and the flexibility for grouping and access to learning is in place to meet their needs;
- highly effective teachers and all staff members have the resources and support to expertly engage students in digital learning and communicate with their parents/guardians about their progress;
- technology-enhanced formative and performance assessments are used effectively to make daily instructional decisions and to provide meaningful feedback to students that empowers them to own their learning; and
- technology is used to differentiate instruction and scaffold learning opportunities that meet the learning needs and diverse backgrounds of all students.

### **What is a *Google Apps for Education* account?**

A *Google Apps for Education* account is a cloud-based, collaborative application platform that provides access to a host of tools and services such as e-mail, online storage, and web-based communication and collaboration applications. Students and staff are assigned secured accounts to the learning environment and are able to access their accounts through any web-enabled device using any mainstream web-browser. The assigned student and staff accounts enable document sharing, collaborative work, and assessment opportunities in this cloud-based platform. For MCPS, participating students and staff are assigned an "@mcpsmd.net" Gmail-like account. Students and staff can log into their account via any web-enabled device (i.e. laptop/ desktop computer, tablet, or smart phone) using any modern web-browser (i.e. Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Safari) at



<http://www.google.com>. Students are restricted to only sending and receiving e-mail from other authorized MCPS account holders. Student progress and engagement will be monitored via a learning management system integrated into the platform that allows teachers to send information to students, offer real-time feedback, and monitor progress on activities.

## **What is a Chromebook?**

A Chromebook is a laptop computer that is designed to be used while connected to the Internet and support applications that reside on the web. Chromebooks are account-specific, meaning when a user logs in they immediately have access to their Gmail, their documents, and their apps. Since almost all of the data and applications are stored in the cloud, Chromebooks take seconds to boot and log into, saving precious instructional time.

## **How is MCPS ensuring my child's safety and security?**

MCPS takes its responsibility for protecting the confidentiality of student information very seriously. MCPS has contracted with Google to provide access to *Google Apps for Education* to students and staff in a closed and secure environment that is not accessible to anyone outside of MCPS. Furthermore, classroom teachers and other MCPS staff have visibility into students' e-mail communications to ensure this tool is being used for educational purposes and in accordance with MCPS' Acceptable Use regulations. MCPS access to the *Google Apps for Education* platform is governed by Google's detailed privacy policy and security measures. MCPS is working with Google to ensure that this environment complies with MCPS standards, as well as applicable laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) regulations.

The Strategic Technology Plan's Strategy 3 identifies Respectful, Ethical Engagement in Virtual Communities as a priority for ensuring a vibrant, safe, and welcoming digital learning community. This includes developing curricular materials that teach students and staff to advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information technology. Our goal is to foster a culture that reflects a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, productivity, and civility and demonstrates personal responsibility for lifelong learning. The efforts of the Cybercivility Task Force, which is one of many elements, will be considered as we move forward.

*Google Apps for Education* and mobile devices, such as Chromebooks, grant students' access to a wealth of information and digital content available online. To protect students while they are using the Internet and other web-based tools, MCPS monitors students' online activities and interactions. This includes the blocking and filtering of web content that is deemed obscene, pornographic, or potentially harmful to minors. All Internet traffic on the MCPS network is subject to this filtering process regardless of which device a student uses to connect to and navigate the Internet. The monitoring and filtering of students' Internet usage is implemented in accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), a federal requirement for schools that receive public funding.

As an added precaution to safeguard students, MCPS has enabled a feature of Google Search called "Safe Search" within our Google Apps domain. With "Safe Search" enabled, sexually explicit video and images are filtered from Google Search result pages, along with results that might link to explicit content when logged into their account. In essence, students' Internet searches are safer and more secure than if they were not using their accounts to conduct the same searches.

## **What if I still have questions?**

If you have questions or want additional information on this initiative, please contact the Office of the Chief Technology Officer at 301-279-3581.