

# HACKING GOOGLE FOR EDUCATION

**99 Ways to Leverage Google Tools in  
Classrooms, Schools, and Districts**



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## HACK 21

# EXPAND YOUR USE OF GOOGLE WITH EXTENSIONS

### THE PROBLEM: HOW TO BECOME A MORE EFFECTIVE USER OF GOOGLE

**G**SUITE'S AMAZING ABILITY to help us as educators rests in its ability to share files and collaborate on the same Google app, whether it is Docs, Sheets, Slides, or another feature. Its unparalleled functions are often mimicked by other software providers. Once you understand and use the many features in the G Suite for Education, you will want to become a more effective user so you can manage your time more efficiently. To do this you can use Google extensions in collaboration with various G Suite resources.

In Hack 20 we explained how to personalize Chrome, download apps and extensions, and push them out to others. Now it's time to take that knowledge to the next level. In this chapter we highlight some extensions that will make you a more effective user of Google. Scott has found Google extensions that allow him to be more effective while teaching educators, responding to emails with common phrases or statements, and enhancing the social media presence of his school district. The extensions he

**This extension provides you with time-saving keyboard shortcuts that insert preset messages. You download the extension and set your messages up with the shortcuts.**

uses improve Google's functionality, and allow him the ability to complete tasks more efficiently so he can work on other things.

### **THE HACK: USE SPECIFIC GOOGLE EXTENSIONS TO BECOME A MORE EFFECTIVE GOOGLER**

A Google Extension software program has a specific function which can modify or enhance one or more G Suite programs. Download extensions from the Chrome Store onto your Chrome browser. You will see its symbol on your Chrome browser when you open it. They are easy to use, serve a specific purpose, and make you a more effective Googler. The Chrome Web Store has hundreds, if not thousands, of extensions available for download. You only need to search the store, find what you are looking for, and download it. Check out Hack 20 for more information on how to search for, download, and manage your extensions.



**CLASSROOM:** Stop worrying about the commercial that will play when you show a YouTube video in class. We all love to enhance our lessons through videos. Films can make connections to content being taught and provide excellent visual and auditory experiences. Many of those videos come from YouTube. We appreciate and respect the free access this site provides and have no issue with commercials playing prior to viewing videos. However, when these videos are used in the classroom environment and the teacher has no control over the content of the commercial, we need something to help us control the learning environment. We like [Adblock for YouTube](#). See image 21.1 for what the extension looks like.

Once you download Adblock to your Chrome browser, no commercial will pop up before you show your video. You can take a deep breath and press play without worrying about unexpected, and possibly inappropriate content.

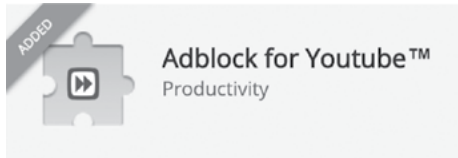


image 21.1 Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission.

**SCHOOL:** Preset auto responses to common statements and comments you make in emails. We often receive emails that require the same response or comment. It might be a simple, “Thank You” or “I’ve received your email.” Other times it’s a response to dozens of emails with the same comment. Typing these responses can be time-consuming and a poor use of time. We like to use [Auto Text Expander](#) from the Chrome Store.

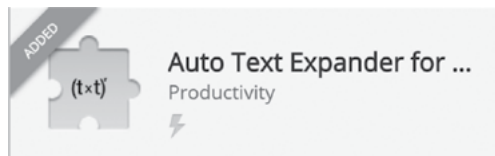


image 21.2 Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission.

This extension provides you with time-saving keyboard shortcuts that insert preset messages. You download the extension and set your messages up with the shortcuts. Do remember that it’s case sensitive. Here are two of Scott’s favorites:

Typing “Thx” produces “Thanks for the email. I will be in contact soon.”

Typing his secretary's initials produces "Please contact my secretary for an appointment."

These preset auto responses make you a more effective educator and communicator, and, let's be honest, it's a cool feature.

**DISTRICT:** Use customized images to communicate with your school district and community. It's our responsibility to provide our school district and community with information about all the great things happening in our district. We can do that the traditional way by sending a message. However, social media now offers more engaging ways to do this through images and customized pictures. You can create your own images quickly and effectively through Chrome extensions like [Awesome Screenshot Capture and Annotate](#).

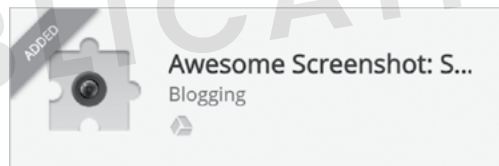


image 21.3 Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission.

Scott uses this extension multiple times a week to create images to send out to his school district and community through the district's social media feeds. Two important notes: (1) ensure that you have the rights to use the image you take from the web (check out Hack 15 for more details on this issue); (2) be sure you have permission from parents to post students' faces. This should be accomplished yearly through an acceptable use form in your school district.

Once you download the Awesome Screenshot Capture and Annotate extension, you will see its symbol, a camera

lens, on your Chrome browser. Find the image you want to use online or use a picture you have taken and click on the camera lens symbol. It will offer you a series of choices to grab the image. Scott always uses the “Capture Selected Area” because he can crop the image. Once you select the area you want to use, that image will open in another Chrome window where you can crop the image, put a shape in or around it, insert an arrow, straight line, or free-formed line, highlight an area, write text, or blur something.

After editing the image, click the “Done” button and the extension asks you where you want the image. You may save the image as a file, copy it to your clipboard, or print the screenshot—your choice is final, so choose wisely. Scott usually chooses one of the first two. If he wants to use the file multiple times, he will save it as a file on his desktop or in Google Drive. If he wants to use it once only by pasting it into a Doc, he will copy it to his clipboard, go to where he wants it, and paste it by right-clicking his mouse.



We use the G Suite because we appreciate its many features that make us more effective, efficient educators. Google extensions expands the functionality of Google even further. Don't stop with the three options we've outlined here. Check out our chapter on the Google Chrome Store for more information on how to find and use other extensions and become a better Googler.

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## HACK 22

# FLIP FACULTY MEETINGS AND LEARNING SPACES WITH SCREENCASTIFY

### THE PROBLEM: STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR IMMERSION

**H**AVE YOU EVER asked teachers or administrators about their thoughts on faculty meetings? Most teachers despise sitting in a room every month, hearing agenda item after agenda item read aloud so that “everyone has gotten the message.” Most administrators stress over the fact that they feel required to plan and run these traditional gatherings. Just for a few seconds, imagine a faculty meeting where you have an opportunity to share best practices, discuss emerging trends, analyze current research, or collaborate on a unit of study. Sounds pretty good, right? Fortunately, we are seeing pockets of this sort of “immersion mindset” in schools around the world, where teachers have autonomy to take control of their professional growth during faculty meeting time.

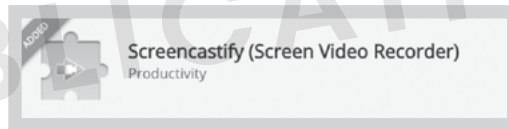
While teachers’ time is being wasted during faculty meetings, consider the use of student time in the classroom. Accountability measures and prescribed curricula may limit what can be done. As a result, students’ “on-task” time often centers around a scripted lesson plan. The teacher might feel compelled to control every single

**People  
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respect their  
time.**

portion of the lesson, and therefore cannot engage students to the extent that might be possible. Students need time in class to collaborate with peers and be supported by teachers. Flipping teacher-directed activities, such as the lecture, can free up time for students to engage in meaningful learning experiences. Google offers the potential for this type of learning environment to exist.

### **THE HACK: CREATE SCREENCASTS WITH THE SCREENCASTIFY GOOGLE CHROME EXTENSION**

Maximize time by flipping the environment you are in charge of creating. This will help free up time for students in class and administrators and teachers in faculty meetings so everyone can participate in engaging learning experiences. Use the Screencastify Google Chrome extension to capture what's on your computer screen through a recorded video. Visit the Chrome Web Store and type in the word Screencastify to select and download the extension.



**Image 22.1** Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission.

Take a look at Image 22.1 for what the extension looks like in the Chrome Web Store.

For clarification purposes, an extension extends or enhances the functionality of the Chrome browser. So in this case, the [Screencastify](#) extension tells the Chrome browser that it's okay to record the screen. Once the extension is downloaded, you will notice the corresponding icon in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. When you're ready, click the "Screencastify" icon and follow the prompts to successfully capture an image or record a screencast.



## What YOU Can Do Tomorrow



**CLASSROOM:** Transform your lecture by creating a brief 10-minute interactive screencast for your lesson or homework. This option serves students better than a 45-minute lecture. You will start to notice that you can say a lot more in less time with a screencast. Students can use the class time that is freed up to collaborate on projects and explore topics that matter to them; your time will be well spent supporting students in more productive ways. Better yet, have your students create their own screencasts to teach themselves and others about the topic at hand. Students could show others how to solve math equations or provide insight on a scientific concept like the periodic table of elements.

**SCHOOL:** Flip your faculty meeting agenda by recording a 5-minute screencast. This is much easier to digest than being talked at for 45 minutes during a traditional faculty meeting. Your recording can be blasted out to staff via email a day prior to the meeting. A large chunk of time is now freed up for meaningful learning and collaboration on topics that affect the success of all students. Teachers could explore educational apps or websites, participate in a book talk, or discuss research methods that help address issues they are experiencing.

**DISTRICT:** Communicate with stakeholders using the Screencastify extension. Sometimes community members cannot attend important district-wide meetings pertaining to standardized testing or online safety. Simply open the Google

Slide deck or other resources you shared during the actual presentation. Then, activate the Screencastify extension and begin recording your screencast. Once complete, upload it to Google Drive and share out the link to stakeholders for them to view at their own leisure.



People appreciate it when others respect their time. Minimizing mundane lecture time with students in the classroom or teachers in a faculty meeting can boost morale and provide folks with an opportunity to dive deep into topics that genuinely interest them. Screencastify is just one of many ways to flip typical learning experiences.



## HACK 23

# BUILD YOUR LEARNING COMMUNITY WITH GOOGLE+

### THE PROBLEM: EDUCATORS FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD

**E**ducators often feel like they're working in their own little bubbles without an authentic space to share, connect, learn, reflect, and collaborate. If you do not agree with this, take a few moments and think about these questions:

- How long have you or another educator kept ideas and tricks to yourself within the confines of your own classroom or office?
- When is the last time you shared a lesson plan or idea with a colleague in your building or with a complete educational stranger halfway across the globe?
- How difficult is it for you to find relevant resources that push your thinking?
- Why is it important to stay connected as an educator?

**As resources and ideas emerge, post them to your PLC's Google+ Community. This sort of hybrid PLC model streamlines the process of sharing and interacting.**

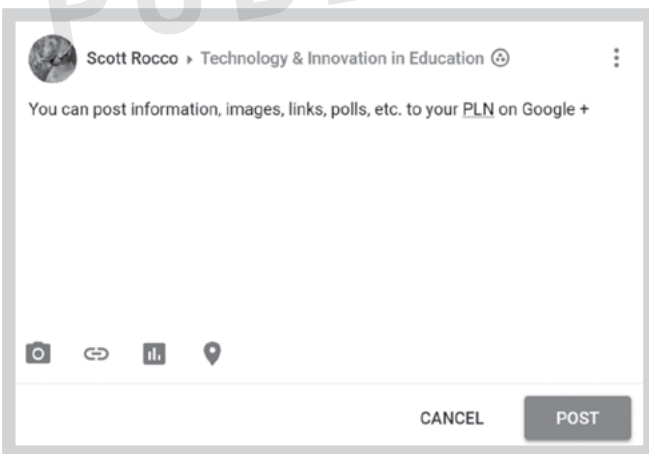
Every educator has something of worth to share. It could be a lesson plan, teaching strategy, technology integration tip, or a way to reach struggling students. Technology presents educators with opportunities to connect and share in novel ways. With a few clicks of the mouse or taps of the screen you can evolve as an educator and ultimately impact student success. Often, though, educators feel reluctant to expand their personal learning networks due to lack of administrative support, time constraints, or because they simply don't know what they don't know. Given an opportunity to sharpen their skills in the virtual world with a tool like Google+, educators will rise to the occasion and drive change.

### **THE HACK: EXPAND YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK**

Take advantage of Google+ to expand your personal learning network. Google+ is a social media program that connects you with other professionals in the same fashion as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn. It's linked to your Google account, so you can connect and share using other Google products.

Access Google+ by locating and clicking on it through the waffle, or you can do a Google search for Google+. As long as you are logged in to your Google account it will bring you to where you need to go.

Take a few moments and look around at all of the different features Google+ has to offer. You will notice



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the stream front and center. This is where you can post and see content, similar to other social media services. Take a look at Image 23.1 to see the various options users have when posting content.

Images, links, polls, text, and location can be pushed out to your PLN on Google+. The three little dots, or what we like to call the traffic signal, allow users to disable re-sharing or having others comment on the post.

Once you are ready to publish content, click the blue “Post” button. You will notice the post is now in your stream on the Google+ homepage. Locate the “Collections” tab on the left-hand side of your Google+ page. This feature allows you to categorize posts by topic. Scan the QR code in [Image 23.2](#) and follow the Hacking Google for Education Google+ Collections page to stay on top of best practices related to all things G Suite for Education.



Image 23.2

Communities, another feature of Google+, works along similar lines as Collections, providing users with the ability to post and start conversations around various topics. However, Collections is simple and topic-specific, whereas Communities is more wide open.

We wanted to create a place for fans of Hacking Google for Education to connect and share with one another, so we went onto Google+, clicked the “Communities” tab, clicked the “Yours” tab, clicked “Create a Community,” named our Community, and made it public for all to follow. We now have a place to meet and share the great Google resources out there for educators.

If you need to access and change your profile, simply click on the “Profile” tab on the left-hand side of the page. Click the “Edit Profile” button to customize your page. The “People” feature gives you a chance to find people, access your followers, and see who is following you. You can also use the “Event” feature to invite people in your Google networks to your virtual or physical events.

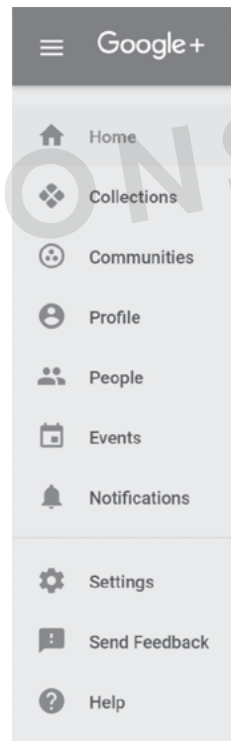


## What YOU Can Do Tomorrow



**CLASSROOM:** Create a virtual classroom community that provides support services to address the needs of all learners. Use the Google+ Collections feature to post content for your students as they navigate their way through a particular unit of study. For example, imagine a world language class where students can access content related to the culture of a French- or Spanish-speaking country. Once the teacher posts content, students can access it through their Google+ accounts and comment with additional resources that they found useful. To take things a step further, students could create their own collections on a topic they are currently learning about. It could be vetted and used by peers as well as students from around the world.

**SCHOOL:** Participate in a virtual professional learning community with subject-area or grade-level colleagues. Using the Community feature in Google+, you can share and comment on colleagues' resources. For example, literacy teachers could form a PLC to focus on nonfiction reading strategies. As resources and ideas emerge, post them to your PLC's Google+ Community. This sort of hybrid PLC model streamlines the process of sharing and interacting. You



**Image 23.3** Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission.



do not even have to meet in the physical world since much of the work can be accomplished virtually. See Image 23.3 for the Communities button.

**DISTRICT:** Communicate information and share resources with a district-wide committee. Every district can benefit from using a Google+ community to organize its numerous district-wide committees. For example, your district might focus on a 1:1 Chromebook learning environment. This sort of initiative is a huge undertaking that affects all stakeholders. It's important to form a committee that includes parents, students, community members, and educators to ensure the initiative ultimately rolls out with success. Over the course of the planning period and eventual rollout, members can share ideas and resources to steer the committee vision. Agendas, meeting minutes, and subcommittee work can be shared out within the Google+ community as well.



Google+ is a very useful collaboration and communication tool for all stakeholders. It can facilitate change, enhance your effectiveness, and connect you with other game-changers in the educational world. Google+ can help you bridge the divide between the physical and virtual worlds. It provides users with an opportunity to amplify their voices and come out of isolation.

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