

# Hartford High School's Digital History Class: Where Creativity and Chromebooks Rule



## About Hartford High School

- Google Apps for Education user since 2010
- Google Chromebooks for Education user since 2011
- Implementing 34 Chromebooks for 81 students in 2012 school year

## Goals

- Introduce technology in the Digital History classroom to create a truly immersive, digital experience for students.

## Approach

- Provided 30 Chromebooks, one for each student, and designed the course around using the Chromebook for everything from research to creating the final presentation.



## Institution

At Hartford High School in Hartford, Vermont, veteran teacher Mike Hathorn wanted to create and teach a class where he could facilitate learning rather than stand in front of the class and lecture. In line with the Hartford School District's mission to provide a caring and dynamic learning community where the intellectual development of students is the highest priority, Hathorn developed the Digital History course and set out to create a learning environment where his vision of bringing history to life for his students could be realized.

## Challenge

In today's digital world, students are expected to be proficient in technology; however, many schools and classrooms are ill-equipped to provide the resources to help students achieve this. Hartford High School was no exception. With internet connectivity available only in the computer labs and a limited number of laptops and computers, students had sporadic access to technology for day-to-day assignments at school. When Hathorn started teaching his Digital History course, he wanted to change that and provide technology to each one of his students.

## Solution

In 2010, Hathorn took five students to Mountain View, CA to present at the [GEO Teachers Institute](#). Following the visit, Hartford High piloted 30 Google Chromebooks for Education in the classroom and in 2011, every Digital History student received their own Chromebook at the beginning of the semester with instructions on how to personalize the device. Loaded with Google Apps, such as YouTube and Google Docs, Digital History has become 100 percent digital. Everything in the class from the initial research to the final website and presentation is done using the Chromebooks.

*"The [Digital History] class is a blend between technology and history where the material we learn is completely based on the hands-on work that we do."*

*—Patric Roberts, Senior, Hartford High School*

Digital History students at Hartford High School use their Chromebooks to research a topic of their choice – from Hurricane Irene to wars to infomercials – then create a website based on the information they learn from reading, conducting interviews and gathering relevant information from various resources. The websites are all made public through Hathorn's [Creating a Digital History](#) site once completed so students learn how to work to obtain the appropriate permissions, and ensure accuracy and authenticity. As testament to the thoroughness and legitimacy of the content, the sites created about [Hurricane Irene](#) were used as a resource by media and the Hartford community on the one year anniversary of the hurricane in 2012.

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## Chromebooks for Education

- Chromebook devices
- Web-based management console
- 24/7 support from Google
- Limited hardware warranty

Google's Chromebook laptops provide fast, affordable, and easy-to-manage computing that allows students to learn anytime, anywhere by accessing the vast resources of the web.

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For more information, visit:  
[www.chromebooks.com/edu](http://www.chromebooks.com/edu)



## Benefits

The Digital History class at Hartford High is not only more engaged in the class, but also interacting and collaborating more with each other, their teachers and the community. In one example, Hathorn asked students researching the Olympics to debate on the topic of whether or not gold medals should be revoked in certain cases. Half the class collaborated on an essay arguing that the medals should be taken away and the other half argued against it. Hathorn shared his student's final essays with the English teacher, who said they were some of the best essays he had ever seen. Senior Patrick Roberts says, "Having nine people work on the same thing at the same time was a totally unique experience. It has transformed the way we learn."

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*"Digital History is a completely different teaching experience from my other classes because of the Chromebooks. Before introducing the technology, even though I was into the history, the students had trouble retaining the information. Now, it is an entirely collaborative experience and the students are as engaged in their learning as I am in teaching the subject."*

—Michael Hathorn, History Teacher, Hartford High School

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Chromebooks have also been helpful for standardized test preparation online. "Students in my Advance U.S. History class who used Chromebooks to prepare for the SAT II: Subject Test last year scored higher on the History portion of the test than any other year," says Hathorn. "In fact, four students scored over 700 on that portion of the test, and I think Chromebooks played a big part in their success as they were able to track their progress online."

## Results

Having Google Chromebooks for Education in the Digital History class improved student achievement by bringing the subject to life for students at Hartford High School. Out of 34 students in the class in 2011, almost all of the students received A grades and scores on the SAT II: History Subject Test increased with four students scoring over 700.