



## Using Google Sites to Increase Curriculum Implementation in the Classroom

School district leaders who are committed to student achievement understand that instruction, learning, and assessment necessitate a vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum. When teachers have readily accessible curriculum learning targets, pacing guides, and a selection of aligned resources, they are free to select the optimal learning activities that will engage learners in achieving the curricular goals. Teachers are not bound to an agenda as determined by a single textbook publisher, nor do they feel constricted by teaching-to-the-text. Instead, dedicated district teachers and administrators work together to create a living document, truly a collection of documents, that becomes a beacon for student achievement and higher levels of classroom instruction, learning, and engagement. Organizing and disseminating these documents, sometimes critical to *multiple* committees and authors, has traditionally been assigned to the curriculum coordinator (AKA: “The Document Stalker”), whose time might be more effectively utilized. The time is ripe for a better solution.

Within the last year, over half a dozen current and former CLI districts have opted to organize their local curriculums using the new CLI Online Curriculum Library, a Google Site template. The benefits for districts using Google (now called G-Suite for Education) are widely known: free email accounts (Gmail), file storage (Google Drive), and file creation (Google Docs). One application that may be underutilized due to time or training constraints is Google Sites. Google Sites could easily serve as your district’s intranet, a closed

network only accessible by those within your district.

### Use with Google Docs

With the simple addition of CLI’s curriculum organization template, a district is well on its way to creating a central hub where every teacher within their district may access, upload, download, or immediately locate relevant documents pertaining to their subject and grade level curriculum. The efficiencies created by using Google Sites for organization simply cannot be overstated. Ideally, existing Word documents would either be imported as or converted into Google docs.

Once a document is converted to a Google Doc, it is *comparable to* a “webpage,” with its own unique URL link — a permanent online presence. With each document within a curriculum assigned its own URL, the ability to interlink documents allows for on-demand information and improved file-finding efficiency. For example, a curriculum document may be linked as many times as needed specifically to each Instructional Planning Resource (IPR), or lesson plan, associated with every component.

Another benefit of Google Docs is the ability to share responsibility for document creation, thus distributing the workload when it’s time to put meat on the bones of a curriculum. For example, maybe you need the English teachers in your district to share ideas and resources for a specific outcome, or in the case of CLI districts, an IPR.

Google Docs enables multiple teachers to contribute to one document simultaneously and instantaneously.

### **File Sharing and Permissions**

With Google Docs and Google Sites, file sharing and permission settings may be customized in any number of configurations. Do you want only the sixth-grade teachers to be able to see the sixth-grade assessments? If the assessment is a Google Doc, you may give document-level access to only the sixth-grade teachers, either as view-only or with editing permission. Alternatively, you may have uploaded the files to the site as PDFs, in which case, you would only give the sixth-grade teachers permission to view the sixth-grade assessment page (enabled through page-level permissions of your site).

### **Decisions to Make**

When using a Google site, it will be important for the site's ultimate design and organization to decide whether you are going to use all Google docs, all Word or PDF documents, or some combination of both that makes sense for the situation. Word and PDF documents uploaded to the site are "physically" stored data on the site and will need to be downloaded and reuploaded for any changes to be reflected on the site. This may be an effective way to control document editing, if that is a concern. Staff with "View only" access to the site may download documents, but not upload them.

Using Google docs instead of Word or PDF files, on the other hand, allows file-level permissions; therefore, changes, edits, or comments may be made in real-time – no uploading or downloading necessary. This could be helpful for documents

that require, or would benefit from, team collaboration and the need for immediacy, such as IPRs or lesson plans.

You will also need to decide who will be the administrator ("owner") of the site. This person(s) will have editorial rights and, in addition, be able to determine theme choice, header design and layout, and control site access and permissions. Other questions regarding site administration include: Who needs permission to view this site? Who needs to be able to edit the site? Do we want to enable page-level permissions? If so, which individuals or teams will have editorial access to which pages?

Most of the districts using the CLI curriculum site template would like for teachers to feel they have the freedom to make updates where they are most needed – on the IPRs. Classroom teachers may find a new website, article, or book to add to their resource list for a curricular outcome. Or, they may see that an old resource is no longer available and want to delete it. When they can keep a document "up-to-date" readily, it truly becomes more functional within the context of daily, weekly, or monthly use.

The gap between curriculum development and classroom implementation is shortened by increasing teacher access to curriculum plans, assessments, pacing guides, and IPRs or lesson plans. The best laid plans are to no avail, if they are buried on a shelf two classrooms down the hall, or on someone else's hard drive a building away. CLI stands ready to help other districts achieve curricular organization through the use of a Google site to promote efficient classroom implementation.