

The Backpack for Google Drive digital portfolio platform supports a flexible and cost effective G Suite-native Graduate Profile initiative for Google schools.



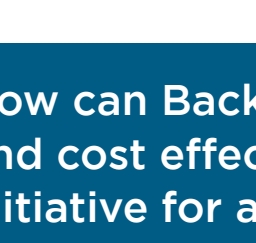
Statement

Jefferson County Public Schools is a large, diverse, metropolitan school district based in Louisville, Kentucky. Their aim is to ensure that every single student within the district receives an education where academic achievement and personal development go hand-in-hand. Partnering with Amplified IT, they deployed the Backpack for Google Drive digital portfolio platform as the cornerstone of their P-12 initiative efforts and have seen incredible success in achieving their goals.

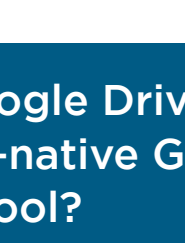
Backpack for Google Drive is digital portfolio platform which allows JCPS students to curate, reflect on, and showcase digital learning artifacts within a customisable, district-defined skills framework. By maintaining a student's portfolio across grades and schools, Backpack for Google Drive creates a comprehensive view into their education.

Backpack for Google Drive works seamlessly with G Suite for Education, so schools can manage student artifacts directly inside Google Drive and connect with Classroom rosters and assignments. This means that district's staff and students can continue to use the systems that they are already comfortable with; dramatically increasing adoption and cutting down on the learning curve.

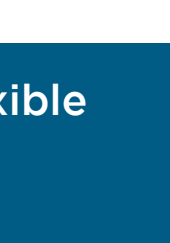
Results



\$8M in new device and network upgrades



3083% Increase in Google Classroom Classes

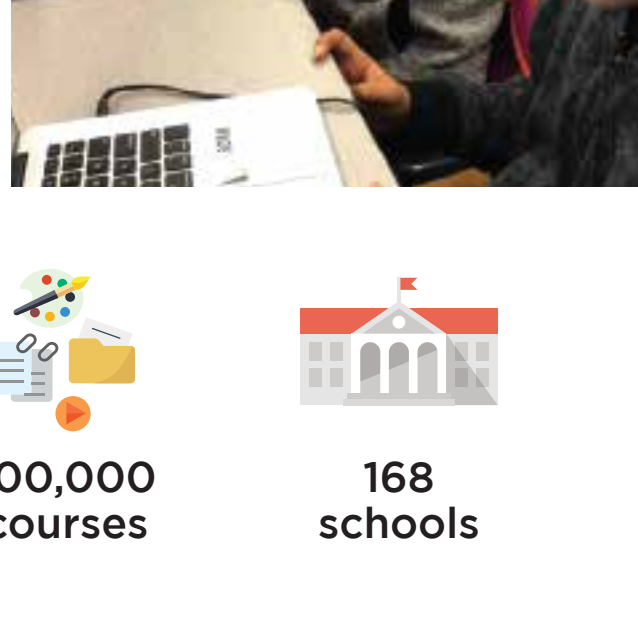


95% Student participation

How can Backpack for Google Drive support a flexible and cost effective G Suite-native Graduate Profile initiative for a Google school?

The Jefferson County Public Schools Backpack of Success Skills aligns district stakeholders around the profile of an ideal graduate: including academic, social, and emotional skills.

This initiative, coupled with the easy-to-use tools of the G Suite for Education platform, allowed the entire district to meaningfully reform and adopt shared language. Then, by elevating students' work, they're able to have meaningful conversations with teachers, students, and the broader community.



101,000 students

6,000 teachers

100,000 courses

168 schools

Problem

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) in Louisville, Kentucky, is among the most socioeconomically and racially diverse metropolitan districts in the country. Historically, it has been home to some of the highest and lowest performing public schools in the state, with some schools showing subpar proficiency rates for math and reading on both state and national tests.

Unfortunately, they faced the dual challenge of high student mobility and a disjointed experience when students move between schools. They had no way to track students' proficiency from school to school, no district-wide instructional focus, and no way to make granular personalized instructional adjustments for struggling students.

Threatened with the spectacle of state takeover in early 2018, JCPS was under scrutiny by some members within its community for falling short in its commitment to provide for the success and engagement of all learners. **There was a clear need for a systematic and impactful plan that prioritized student engagement in learning and developing the critical skills necessary for success after graduation.**

“Let's start at the end. What does a diploma from JCPS mean? What skills and knowledge do we want graduates to walk away with when they leave JCPS?”

- Carmen Coleman, Chief Academic Officer, Jefferson County Public Schools

Solution

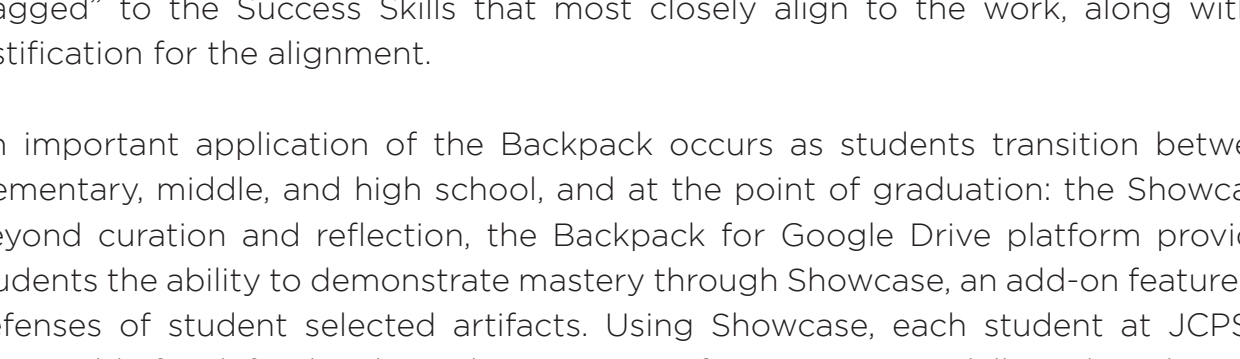
Dr. Carmen Coleman is the current leader of Jefferson County Public School's district-level leadership and is responsible for developing their pedagogical vision. Together with JCPS Superintendent, Dr. Marty Pollio, district leaders, school staff, and the community they explored the skills that are most essential to student success beyond graduation. **The group developed 3 key questions to focus their efforts:**

- **What are the most essential skills for success?**
- **What kinds of experiences will lead to those outcomes?**
- **When and where, in your school, do students get those kinds of experiences and do ALL students have those opportunities?**

These questions were examined and discussed with stakeholders to create the JCPS 'Success Skills': empathy, communication, work ethic, critical thinking, collaboration, and perseverance. Similar approaches have been initiated in districts across the United States, with initiatives such as Portrait of a Graduate.

The next step was to formulate a way to put these Success Skills into the hands of students. While JCPS reviewed many digital portfolio platforms, none supported the custom branding, alignment with their skills framework, or sufficiently deep integration with existing systems. As a Google for Education district, it was important to have a platform that would work seamlessly within the Google ecosystem. Further, the solution must be easy to use so that it could scale to support the states' largest district.

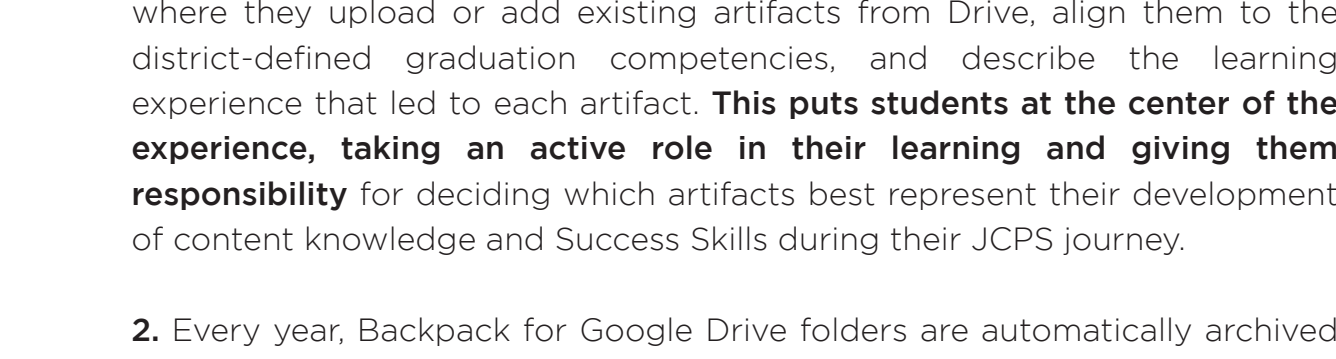
After turning to Google for assistance, Amplified IT was brought in to address these needs. **Their goal was to design and build a scalable, Google-integrated platform that would support JCPS's instructional shift towards a 21st-century graduate profile.**



How it works

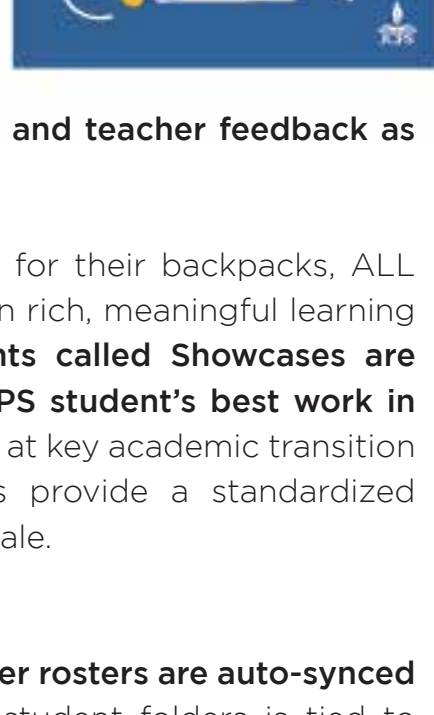
Similar to a physical backpack, Backpack for Google Drive creates a structured online environment for students to save digital artifacts into their "Backpack of Success Skills". This allows them to document items that reflect examples of accomplishments and meaningful experiences that meet the parameters of the JCPS Graduate Profile. Their growing collection of artifacts produces proof of their learning beyond traditional disciplines. Through this process of curation, students develop meta-cognitive skills while showing evidence of their mastery of the district's Success Skills. Artifacts include student reflections on the learning experience, and are "tagged" to the Success Skills that most closely align to the work, along with a justification for the alignment.

An important application of the Backpack occurs as students transition between elementary, middle, and high school, and at the point of graduation: the Showcase. Beyond curation and reflection, the Backpack for Google Drive platform provides students the ability to demonstrate mastery through Showcase, an add-on feature for defenses of student selected artifacts. Using Showcase, each student at JCPS is responsible for defending his or her mastery of JCPS Success Skills and readiness at the key transition points at the end of fifth grade, eighth grade, and before high school graduation.



Key Benefits of JCPS using Backpack for Google Drive:

1. Backpack for Google Drive provides students a simple, intuitive experience where they upload or add existing artifacts from Drive, align them to the district-defined graduation competencies, and describe the learning experience that led to each artifact. **This puts students at the center of the experience, taking an active role in their learning and giving them responsibility** for deciding which artifacts best represent their development of content knowledge and Success Skills during their JCPS journey.
2. Every year, Backpack for Google Drive folders are automatically archived and organized by school year. **This gives JCPS students and teachers a longitudinal, competency-aligned view on the evidence of learning throughout the students' career.** This process ensures students are continually challenged to reflect on their learning and set goals for ongoing improvement.
3. Backpack for Google Drive grounds the district conversation in the shared language and evidence identified in their Success Skills process. **This drives changes in both the instructional behaviour and assessment practice required to fully achieve 21st century learner outcomes for all students.** By providing visibility into student work over time, and relating that work to a shared set of defined skills, Backpack offers a vehicle through which educators, district leadership, and community members can align their efforts to drive changes in culture and professional practice. Backpack's enablement of change in culture and practice makes the platform a key lever through which a district can more equitably provide rich learning experiences and personalized pathways for all students.
4. Backpack's look and feel is highly customizable, with platform name, skills, icons, and colors all defined by the district. **This allows JCPS to ensure branding matches their local stakeholder engagement and communication strategy.**
5. Backpack rosters and sharing can be automated from Google Classroom rosters, and the platform standardizes a Google Drive folder structure where artifacts are stored in their original formats, with full revision and comment history. Artifacts tagged to Backpack skills get automatically organized into color-coded, appropriately-named folders in Drive that are always accessible to a student's teachers. **Because the files in Backpack are the originals, and owned by the student, students can continue revising their work in response to peer and teacher feedback as they prepare for Showcase assessments.**
6. In order to have the kind of evidence needed for their backpacks, ALL students must have the opportunity to take part in rich, meaningful learning experiences. **Structured performance assessments called Showcases are curated collections of artifacts that reflect a JCPS student's best work in support of each skill area.** These can be presented at key academic transition points and student-led conferences. Showcases provide a standardized structure for performance-based assessment at scale.
7. Backpack for Google Drive ensures JCPS Teacher rosters are auto-synced with Google Classroom. Sharing permission on student folders is tied to those rosters and Backpack for Google Drive pairs with JCPS's Little SIS Sync Agent service to provide SIS integration.



Outcomes:

The JCPS Backpack of Skills initiative rolled out on the Backpack for Google Drive platform at the beginning of the 2018 school year. **The platform provides educators a format to take the academic pulse of students, assess transition readiness, and evaluate student work.** These checks are completed together with professional conversations that drive instructional adjustments for students district-wide. Additionally, the initiative has provided an avenue for student intervention; redirecting students that are short of reaching grade-level requirements or prepared for key transitions.

Beyond the immediate impact to schools, students and teachers, the first year of implementation has provided the district a wealth of evidence upon which to reflect and reform their professional supports, assessment practices, and more.

In the course of one year, Google Classroom usage sky-rocketed from less than 1,200 to over 37,000 classes, with equally significant jumps in the usage of Google's collaborative authoring tools like Docs, Slides, etc. The ability for teachers to auto-sync rosters to Google classroom and directly connect students folders with their digital backpack made the transition smooth and adoption easy.

The students welcomed the new platform and goals with over 900,000 artifacts being tagged and aligned by students over the course of the year. As the school year came to a close, students engaged in the culminating experience of the Backpack for Google Drive platform. Students from grades 5, 8, and 12 all prepared to give their transitional defense. **Over 20,000 students participated in presenting their defense by demonstrating their knowledge in front of panels of teachers, family, and community members.**

Today, JCPS is considered a trailblazer in deeper-learning reform. The innovative results that JCPS has achieved through the implementation of the Backpack for Google Drive platform and their district-wide instructional change initiative has been a huge success. It combines the documentation and portability of digital documentation, the skills of reflection and curation, and the expectation of presentation and performance assessments. This integrated learning, assessment, and life readiness approach builds on previous initiatives across the country. **Ultimately, the high quality of their systems change approach is providing an incredible example of what a successful Graduate Profile initiative implementation looks like when combined with the right digital portfolio platform.**