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In this column, we explore the issue of teachers and technology—not just as it relates to CALL solutions, but also to Internet, software, and hardware concerns that all teachers face. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

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The Google Educator Accreditation Process for Language Teachers

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Hubbard (2007) noted that contemporary language teachers not only need to have competent theoretical knowledge and social power, but they must also be responsible for the maintenance and growth of their technological proficiency. In this article, I report on my summer holiday professional development experience becoming a certified Google Educator. Soon after I started this journey, I discovered that a Google Educator's training does not simply amount to a lesson on search strategies or using Gmail; Google offers a range of powerful, free educational tools or apps that teachers can take advantage of in their language classrooms. Google Forms (see Milliner & Flowers, 2015), Google Sheets, Google Docs (see Firth & Mesureur, 2010; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014), Google Sites, Google Maps (see McMillan, 2013), YouTube, Google Draw, and Google Hangouts are all examples of the great tools available (see Figure 1). As I began training on how to effectively use each one of these tools, I quickly realized that I needed to become more than competent at using each one should I want to pass the Google Educators' test and become an accredited Google Educator.

Online Google Education Training

In early 2015, Google redesigned the teacher training and accreditation process, and it now offers free, online, self-paced, guided courses aimed at growing the practical skills teachers may need in the classroom. After logging into your Google account, a teacher can work through a variety of study units, each bookended with a series of diagnostic multiple choice quizzes. Learning progress is saved by the system, so you can take a break from training and pick up the lesson exactly where you left off. There are currently three free training programs available for educators: Fundamentals Training (12-hours), Advanced Training (10-hours), and Devices Training (for Android Tablets and Chromebooks). Each course is composed of a variety of small units such as *How to analyze student data*, *How to build interactive lessons*, *How to teach students online*, and *How to expand your access to help and learning*. Within these units, training and brainstorming activities are used to illustrate how Google apps can be used to serve specific learning goals. Some examples of the learning tasks included listing how Docs and Slides can be used to promote student collaboration, and creating a playlist of educational videos inside one's English teaching YouTube channel.

Accreditation

After completing the online training, a teacher is eligible to sit a certification exam. For a small fee, a teacher can sit a Certified Educator Level 1 exam ($10 USD/180 minutes) and Certified Educator Level 2 exam ($25 USD/180 minutes). These certifications enable a teacher to prove their proficiency using Google Apps in the classroom, and, if successful, that teacher is allowed to add the certification badge (see Figure 2) to their résumé, emails, and other professional correspondence. Teachers can also choose to further their Google Educator accreditations as a Google Certified Trainer or Google Certified Innovator.

Figure 1. **The Google Apps for Education Suite (Google for Education, 2015c).**

Figure 2. **Certified Educator badge (Google for Education, 2015b).**

The Level One Test

At the time of writing, I can only report on my experiences taking the Level 1 test. In fact, I failed my first attempt. To describe the testing process, after applicants pay $10 USD to sit the test, Google contacts you within 24 hours with information concerning the test. From my experience, one should be prepared to dedicate the full 3-hours to sitting this test, as it was very detailed. The test had two sections. The first is a 20-question multiple choice and drag-and-drop section relating to Google Apps and good practices in teaching with technology. The second section asks you to fulfill a variety of teaching tasks using the Google Apps for Education Suite (e.g., building a class website, analyzing a class' grade sheet, or creating a slideshow for an upcoming class).

A test taker needs to achieve more than 80% overall to pass the test. If the test taker fails, they are unable to take the test again for two weeks. Should they fail the test a second time, they must wait a further 60 days before they can take the test for a third time. An examinee is also not allowed to take the test more than three times in a calendar year. With these strict rules and the expenses involved in taking the tests, it is important that the teacher is well prepared prior to attempting the exam. Regarding test support, the exam is an open book test, and the Google Educators Training Center provides a variety of example test questions. Moreover, a test taker can use the unit summary questions found at the end of each Google Educators training module as a way to prepare for the test.

I would also like to stress that for teachers who are already familiar with many of the Google tools and may be tempted to skip units during their study, Google Apps are always developing, and it is valuable to learn the refinements to each Google

App. Moreover, if you skip a unit, you miss out on learning from the practical activities connected to each study unit (see Figure 3). I found that each unit helped me generate new ideas for using Google apps in my language classroom while also developing my technological skills. Particularly engaging are the solutions and ideas put forward by other educators.
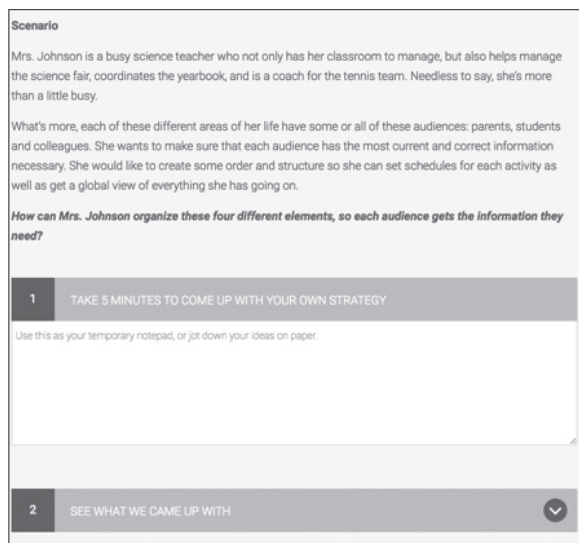

Figure 3. **Example of a Google Educators training brainstorming activity (Google for Education, 2015a).**

Units of Interest

The YouTube unit was especially helpful for me as a language teacher. It showed me how to create my personal YouTube channel and YouTube playlists of related videos. Fortunately for me, I was able to put these new skills into action when I was asked to create a looping sequence of student videos and an interactive world map for my university's festival. As was noted earlier, the curating of playlists has made searching and filing YouTube teaching content for my classes much more efficient. In addition, the YouTube units introduced me to a wide variety of useful education channels (e.g., Google for Education, The Google Educast, and Google Online Education). I learned how to seamlessly embed YouTube content into my lesson slides and how to create online worksheets with embedded video content (as explained in a previous Wired column by Milliner and Flowers, 2015). I now use this to confirm that students watched the video while also promoting deeper engagement with the video content using the questions in the Google Form. Another useful tip for language teachers was how closed captions

and translations can be employed to support language learners.

As many would argue, the strongest attraction for using Google Drive's apps are their collaborative powers. The unit on promoting student collaboration in the classroom was particularly useful for me. I learned how to plan for using Google Drive tools to support collaborative learning. The practical examples detailing how teachers and students can measure collaborators' contributions to a final product were particularly helpful such as the *revision history* located under the file tab. I also learned how the different tools could be intertwined to ensure more efficient collaborative work. For example, in order to track which part of a project students are working on, or if I want to make a class contact list, I would ask my students to complete a Google Form which then funnels responses into a spreadsheet document (Google Sheet).

Conclusion

Although I struggled with my first test, I wholeheartedly recommend that language teachers consider investing time in developing their technical skills through this program. The Google Educators' program is flexible and cheap, and provides a wide variety of tools that will help all language teachers. The online courses are well designed and structured in a way that is very manageable for busy teachers. Stockwell (2009) advocated that it is best for CALL novices or teachers who want to improve their CALL skills to engage with communities of practice. Google has a variety of vibrant Google Educator groups (GEGs) within Japan (e.g., GEG West Tokyo, GEG Kyoto, and GEG Osaka) which can be a window into how Google apps are being used in the classroom as well as a nurturing support group for your professional journey.

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Editor's Note: As demonstrated by this issue's article, there is a wealth of training available for teachers to become experts in CALL and educational technology. One other amazing opportunity is coming up in early June at JALT-CALL 2016! This article's author, Brett Milliner, has been a strong supporter of the CALL SIG as our treasurer and also as one of the site chairs for the upcoming conference. Be sure to congratulate him on this article and ask him about becoming a Google Educator when you see him at the conference in Tamagawa. There will be plenty of chances to learn new ways to keep your lessons *Wired!*

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