



Capturing the Classroom:

How Google Sidestepped School Authorities to Push
its Products into Schools

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Introduction

Not long ago, school districts made decisions about major technology contracts—such as laptops for students—after a rigorous and competitive process that carefully weighed factors including cost, usefulness and safeguards on children’s privacy. In the past decade, Google has radically transformed that model by directly enlisting teachers to push their products into the classroom.

By insinuating itself under the guise of so-called teacher professional training summits with catchy names like “Googlepalooza,” “Get Googley Online” and “Moonshot,” the company, with the help of teacher “evangelists,” has established a near-ubiquitous presence in classrooms throughout the U.S. public school system.¹



Children serve as EdTechTeam props during 2017 Google Summit in Taiwan

Festooned with balloons in Google’s primary colors, rah-rah Google seminars promote the company’s products to teachers and administrators, often adopting the boosterish look and feel of a multi-level marketing conference. The events are far removed from the typically dry educator-training meetings.² Students are often recruited as props as teachers and “EdTech” presenters share inspirational tales of classrooms transformed by Google’s products.

Google’s strategy has proved enormously successful. Today, 25 million students worldwide use Google’s Chromebooks at school, 30 million teachers and students use Google Classroom, and more than 80 million people use G Suite for Education.³

But Google’s approach in the education world has striking similarities to Coca-Cola’s and Pepsi’s efforts in the 1990s to create lifelong customers by placing vending machines in every school.⁴ “The tech companies do know that the sooner you get kids, adolescents, or teenagers used to your platform, the easier it is to become a lifelong habit,” a former Google employee, Vijay Koduri, said recently.⁵

¹ <https://www.americaninno.com/chicago/googlepalooza-brings-edtech-professional-development-to-cps-teachers/>;
<https://www.smores.com/b0p12-join-us-online>;
<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/blog/coming-together-to-change-the-future-of-education-at-googles-moonshot-summit-30-jul-2015>

²

https://www.google.com/search?q=GOOGLE+TEACHER+SUMMIT+BALLOONS&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjHptThouHfAhVG11kKHeXqCT0Q_AUIECgD&biw=1713&bih=874

³ <https://theoutline.com/post/4436/google-classroom-education-free-software-children-school-tech?zd=1&zi=e2ys6fvh>

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/colawars032399.htm> <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/29/nyregion/vending-machines-sweet-deal-or-just-too-many-sweets.html?auth=login-email> https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/press_release/captive-kids-a-report-on-commercial-powers-on-kids-at-schools-part-two/ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1994/05/25/35food.h13.html>

⁵ <https://www.businessinsider.com/silicon-valley-parents-raising-their-kids-tech-free-red-flag-2018-2>

Gary Stager, an internationally recognized educator and advocate for the use of responsible technology in the classroom, compared the Google teacher training summits to a cross between an “Amway convention and cult meeting.”

“The pyramid scheme known as the Google Certified Educator program turns innocent well-meaning teachers into street corner hustlers armed with a participation trophy for heroically mastering ‘The Google,’” Stager says.⁶

5. Ask : “Let me see what you did in you Google Classroom today.” This is so much better than asking, “What did you learn today in school?”

Slide from 2017 Chester NJ teacher presentation for Parent Technology Night

The story of how Google took over the classroom in half-a-dozen years was explored in 2017 by *The New York Times*, which detailed how Google was transforming public education by providing low-cost laptops and free apps to schools across the country.⁷ A GTP review of publicly-available information about Google’s education drive—including from open records requests, grant materials, financial disclosures and school board documents—raises further questions about the company’s tactics to capture the classroom.

The analysis found that the company implemented a three-pronged strategy to take over America’s—and increasingly, the world’s—classrooms. First, Google pitched its education products directly to teachers, hooking them up with lucrative consulting contracts and turning them into advocates for Google’s products with their peers.

Second, Google passed off much of the expense of teacher training on its products to school boards, thus helping defray the costs associated with conducting thousands of Google Education seminars. The result was a gold rush for a fledgling EdTech industry that trained teachers on Google products by tapping into schools’ “professional development” funding. Today, hundreds of companies and teacher evangelists offer such services not only for Google, but for Apple, Microsoft and other tech companies.

Third, Google relied on its relationships with well-connected education officials to lobby for its products. Not only have Google’s evangelists worked to push the company’s products locally, but they’ve also worked with Google’s EdTech partners to participate in influential working groups on national education policy.

⁶ <http://stager.tv/blog/?tag=google-apps-for-education>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/13/technology/google-education-chromebooks-schools.html>

Jonathan Rochelle, a product manager for G Suite for Education, for example, served as a member of the Board of Education in Chester, New Jersey, until the end of 2017.⁸ The school district adopted Chromebooks during his term.⁹ Google’s “Chief Education Evangelist” Jaime Casap continues to serve as a 10th grade public school teacher at the Phoenix Coding Academy.¹⁰ Jennie Magiera and Chris Craft, two evangelists with Google for Education “partner” EdTechTeam, advised the Department of Education and Obama White House officials on technology in schools.¹¹

Google’s strategy appears to have been inspired in large part by Esther Wojcicki, the former mother-in-law of Google founder Sergey Brin and mother of YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki,¹² whose high-level ties hint at the strategic importance of the effort to the company’s future.

A journalism teacher at Palo Alto High School and a longtime Google consultant, Wojcicki was one of the first to develop the idea of a Google Teacher Academy, and today “remains a guiding force” with the company’s educational outreach.¹³ As an educational consultant to the company in 2005-2006, Wojcicki designed the Google Teacher Outreach Program and the Google’s Teacher Academy.¹⁴

In her training sessions, Wojcicki instructed teachers to get their students to open Gmail accounts, and suggested ways to circumvent objections by the school districts. “Have them sign up for a Gmail Account,” Wojcicki wrote. “If district blocks email accounts, sign up for as many dummy email accounts as you need and let students use them in class.”¹⁵

Wojcicki’s insight—that teachers and administrators themselves would be a far more effective sales force than company representatives in pushing Google’s products to schools—was evident from an

⁸ <https://www.jonathanrochelle.com/jr-in-education>

⁹ <https://www.chester-nj.org/domain/374>

¹⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jaimecasap/>

¹¹ <https://tech.ed.gov/files/2015/12/NETP16.pdf> (P. 95);

<https://www.edtechteam.com/team/jenniemaigiera/>;

<https://www.christophercraft.com/about.html>;

<https://www.edtechteam.com/google/>

¹² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathleenchaykowski/2018/07/11/esther-wojcicki-on-raising-two-of-the-nations-most-successful-women-entrepreneurs-anne-susan/#2d3d35290c9f>.

¹³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20181009143328/http://www.moonshotsedu.com/>

¹⁴ <https://creativecommons.org/author/estherwojcicki/>

¹⁵

https://web.archive.org/web/20181130184255/http://static.googleusercontent.com/media/www.google.com/en/educators/learning_materials/necc_docs_spreadsheet_s.pdf

early teacher academy pilot organized at Google’s headquarters in November 2006. After being certified by Mountain View, teachers were expected to lead “at least three related professional development activities for local educators.”¹⁶

Today, Wojcicki’s program has spawned hundreds of EdTech consultants and resellers offering Google education training and certification programs for teachers and administrators around the world.¹⁷



Yet Google’s aggressive use of educators to push its products to the classroom has raised thorny questions about potential conflicts of interest and time spent away from educators’ primary jobs—teaching students. Google’s marketing push also raises questions about whether the promise of a consulting contract with Google or its EdTech suppliers may inappropriately influence teachers’ decisions in the classroom.

Google isn’t the only technology company trying to push its products into the classroom. Microsoft, Amazon and Apple, as well as other device manufacturers and software developers, all have aggressive programs targeted at classrooms. Many, such as Amazon Inspire,¹⁸ Microsoft’s Certified Educator program¹⁹ and Apple’s Distinguished Educator program, take a page directly from Google’s playbook, also courting teachers and administrators with free trips, software and, increasingly, lucrative consulting gigs moonlighting for EdTech companies.^{20 21}

“Have them sign up for a Gmail Account,” Google’s Esther Wojcicki instructed teachers. “If district blocks email accounts, sign up for as many dummy email accounts as you need and let students use them in class.”

But Google’s early 2006 entry into the education market and its aggressive outreach to teachers set the standard. Google’s business model also allows it to undercut the competition: it doesn’t need to make money from the laptops like Apple, or from the software, like Microsoft. Instead, it can offer its

¹⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20061107233522/http://www.edgateway.net:80/cs/google/print/docs/754>

¹⁷ <https://edudirectory.withgoogle.com/en>

¹⁸ <https://www.amazoninspire.com/faqs#GettingStarted>

¹⁹ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/learning/mce-certification.aspx>

²⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/03/technology/silicon-valley-baltimore-schools.html>,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/13/technology/google-education-chromebooks-schools.html>

²¹ <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-05-23-from-edcamps-to-google-11-professional-development-offerings-for-teachers-this-summer>

products at cost, or even as a loss-leader, in exchange reaping a lifetime supply of the essential feedstock for its business—data about millions of new users to help the company better target ads.²²

Left unexamined in Google’s aggressive push into the classroom is whether its EdTech strategy is actually making students smarter. A growing chorus of educators think the answer is no. For example, Joe Clement and Matt Miles, two social studies teachers at Chantilly High School in Virginia, say the avalanche of iPads, Chromebooks, Google Docs and YouTube in the classroom actually makes it more difficult for students to concentrate, and learn.²³

“Students need no help from schools developing their tablet, smartphone, or Twitter skills. They are doing this on their own,” the teachers told *The Washington Post*. “What they need help with is critical thinking, problem solving, and community building.”

Parents, too, are beginning to question big tech’s invasion of the classroom. DC Urban Mom, a popular message board in the Washington, D.C., area, is full of comments from anxious parents concerned about the downside of technology in today’s classrooms. They report seeing kids rushing through lessons for “reward” time on Chromebooks; spending “device time fooling with avatars, fancy fonts, and lame clip art” rather than writing or imagining; and having books “read” to them by computers so they stay occupied while teachers take a break.²⁴

The concerted push to put devices in front of children at public schools contrasts with the growing concerns among Silicon Valley tech executives about technology in their own children’s classrooms. Increasingly, executives from Google and other technology companies are choosing to send their kids to “tech-free” schools such as the Waldorf School in Los Altos, stocked with “retro” chalk, blackboards, encyclopedias, workbooks and No. 2 pencils.²⁵

Alan Eagle, a Google employee who works in the company’s executive communications division and has written speeches for the company’s former Chairman, Eric Schmidt, is blunt about the threats posed by the modern classroom. “I fundamentally reject the notion you need technology aids in grammar school,” he said. “The idea that an app on an iPad can better teach my kids to read or do arithmetic, that’s ridiculous.”²⁶

Adding to all of these concerns is the perennial issue for products involving Google: privacy. Advocates have warned for years that Google is tracking every move students make online and that parents have few options to keep their children out of Google’s system.²⁷ While the company insists it complies with the law, it has never properly answered a host of questions, including whether a

²² <http://fortune.com/2015/12/02/google-eff-chromebook/>

²³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/hitting-the-return-key-on-education/2017/10/08/01215334-a932-11e7-b3aa-c0e2e1d41e38_story.html

²⁴ <http://www.dcurbanmom.com/jforum/posts/list/100/677084.page>

²⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/technology/at-waldorf-school-in-silicon-valley-technology-can-wait.html>

²⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/technology/at-waldorf-school-in-silicon-valley-technology-can-wait.html>

²⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2015/12/28/google-is-tracking-students-as-it-sells-more-products-to-schools-privacy-advocates-warn/>

student's use of Google education tools in the classroom is used to build a historical profile that is "switched on" when the student reaches adulthood.

Esther Wojcicki and Google launch Google Teacher Academy

In October 2006, Google made its first foray into the classroom, announcing a new set of resources for teachers that included a suite of Google products and tutorials on how they might be used in the classroom.²⁸ In conjunction with the announcement, Esther Wojcicki, whose son-in-law, Sergey Brin, was a Google founder, helped the company develop an outreach pilot program to teachers that came to be known as the Google Teacher Academy.²⁹



2008 Google Teacher Academy presentation encouraged teachers to aggressively push its products to peers

Wojcicki was a high school journalism and English teacher for more than 25 years and, from the start, the program she designed for Google focused on teachers and their power to spread the word about Google's classroom potential—all while bypassing the administrators that typically make decisions about technology and other educational tools. Wojcicki took an active role in the training, explaining in one early session how teachers could get around school district rules to get their students the email accounts needed to access Google's products.

The new pilot program was launched as a partnership between Google and the San Francisco-based WestEd, a nonprofit that worked with school districts in Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah to train teachers on the Google suite of tools.³⁰ A second nonprofit, CUE, formerly known as Computer-Using Educators, was also enlisted to help produce the early Google Teacher Academies.³¹ The details of the financial arrangement between Google, WestEd and CUE are unclear, although WestEd's 2006 annual report notes that Google was a financial contributor.³²

WestEd and Google held the first Teacher Academy for K-12 educators in Northern California at Google's Mountain View headquarters in November 2006.³³ The invitation for the event promised a

²⁸ https://googlepress.blogspot.com/2006/10/k-12-educators-put-new-google-resource_11.html

²⁹ <https://creativecommons.org/2008/07/10/education-innovator-esther-wojcicki-joins-creative-commons-board/>, <https://thinkcerca.com/about/press-releases/thinkcerca-announces-appointment-esther-wojcicki-education-technology-pioneer-board-directors/>

³⁰ <https://www.wested.org/about-us/>, <https://web.archive.org/web/20061025220705/http://www.google.com/educators/index.html>

³¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20161231120128/https://sites.google.com/site/gtaresources/events/agenda>

³² https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/ar-07-01.pdf

³³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20061107233745/http://www.edgateway.net:80/cs/google/print/docs/753>

“hands-on” experience with Google products and instructional resources that teachers were encouraged to share with colleagues.³⁴

A teacher application for another pilot, in New York City in January 2007, revealed that from the outset the training program was designed to select teachers with large peer and professional networks.³⁵

“Approximately how many educators do you currently reach each school year with the professional development activities that you lead?” one of the questions on the application asked.³⁶

Participants were also encouraged to recruit other teachers to become Google-certified. The application required teachers to commit to leading “at least three professional development activities as a Google Certified Teacher” and report back to Google on their progress.³⁷

Teachers were also required to sign non-disclosure agreements with Google before being allowed to participate in the Teacher Academies.³⁸

Google hosted additional teacher training sessions during the spring and summer of 2007 in Santa Monica and Los Altos. A ZDNet story at the time noted that teachers selected for the Google Teacher Academy had to convince Google in advance that they could successfully “evangelize technology throughout their institutions” and to their colleagues.³⁹

For a Los Altos teacher-training session that year, Wojcicki walked through a 57-page presentation on how to integrate Google Docs and Spreadsheets into the classroom. The presentation even offered helpful instructions to teachers on how to circumvent any school district rules preventing teachers from setting up non-school email accounts for their students.

“Have them sign up for a Gmail Account,” Wojcicki wrote. “If district blocks email accounts, sign up for as many dummy email accounts as you need and let students use them in class.”⁴⁰

³⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20061107233522/http://www.edgateway.net:80/cs/google/print/docs/754>

³⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20070203183635/http://www.google.com:80/educators/gta.html>

³⁶ https://web.archive.org/web/20070204062946/http://www.edgateway.net:80/google/GTA_App.pdf

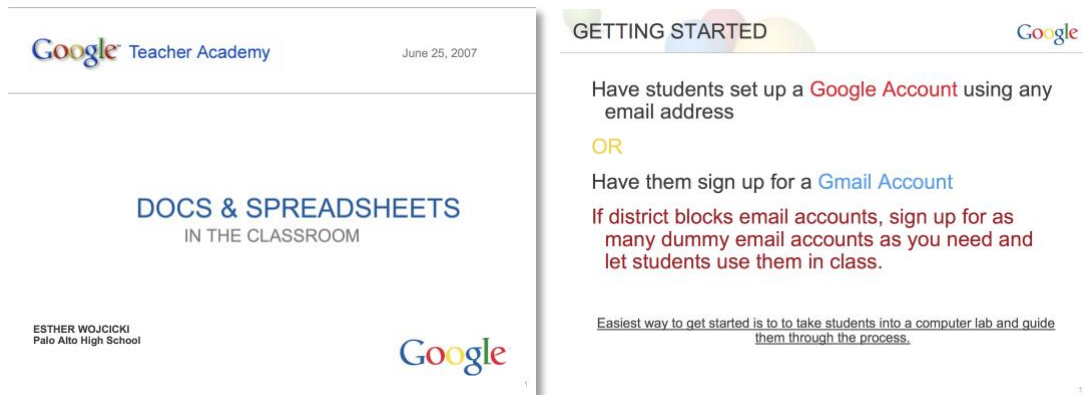
³⁷ https://web.archive.org/web/20070204062946/http://www.edgateway.net:80/google/GTA_App.pdf

³⁸ <https://web.archive.org/web/20111027132013/https://sites.google.com/site/gtaresources/events/2011-07-28/nda>

³⁹ <https://www.zdnet.com/article/google-pushes-more-google-in-your-classroom-education-rules/>

⁴⁰

https://web.archive.org/web/20181130184255/http://static.googleusercontent.com/media/www.google.com/en/educators/learning_materials/necc_docs_spreadsheets.pdf



Esther Wojcicki's 2007 Google Teacher Academy presentation to Los Altos High School teachers

From their inception, Google's education training programs have faced controversy for the aggressive marketing techniques they employ. An October 2006 commentary in Search Engine Journal compared Google's teacher training programs to in-school marketing campaigns to put Coke machines in cafeterias or book covers sponsored by Nestle or Domino's Pizza.⁴¹

"By harnessing the influence of teachers, Google is essentially cutting out the middle man and going directly to the talking heads who teach our children," the article noted.

Gary Stager, the education expert who criticized Google teacher certifications as Amway-like and cultish, has been equally critical of Google's marketing of Google Docs to students and teachers. Stager notes that the "collaborative" power of Google Docs is largely meaningless. "You may write different parts of something and smush them together. You may peer edit," he writes. "[B]ut writing is a solo sport. Writing is the result of one person's internal processes."⁴²

His views on the millions of Chromebooks in the classroom are equally harsh: "Providing students with a Chromebook rather than a proper laptop computer is akin to replacing your school orchestra instruments with kazoos," he says, noting that the devices are now used by students "primarily to charge their iPhones."⁴³

Wojcicki herself has faced scrutiny for her failure to disclose her ties to the company. A 2008 article in Valleywag took Wojcicki to task for promoting a student writing project sponsored by Google and touting the use of Google Docs in a Huffington Post op-ed she wrote while failing to disclose that she had served as an education consultant to the company.

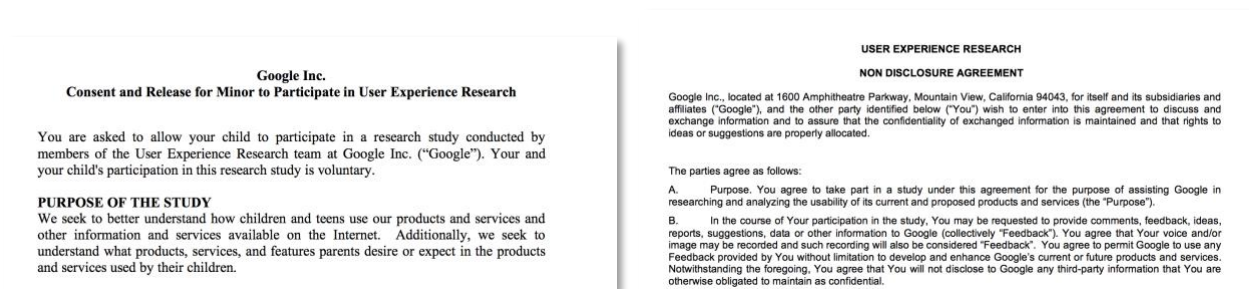
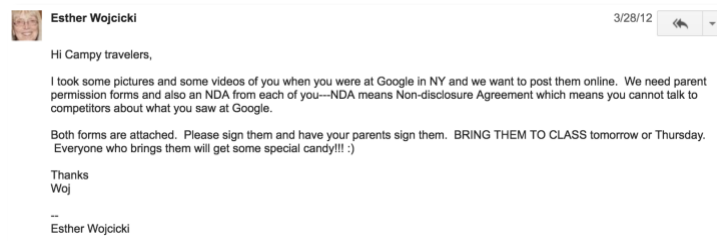
⁴¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110403054336/http://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-using-certified-teachers-to-reach-k-12-students/3892/>

⁴² <http://stager.tv/blog/?p=4012>

⁴³ <http://stager.tv/blog/?tag=google-apps-for-education>

“Woj does not say she has previously been employed by Google as an ‘education consultant’ from 2005 to 2006, creating several programs which promoted Google to teachers,” the article noted, concluding that if Wojcicki couldn’t even write a truthful disclaimer noting her conflicts of interest, she shouldn’t be teaching journalism to Palo Alto high school students.⁴⁴

Wojcicki may have also used her own journalism students as guinea pigs to test Google’s education products. Posting to a school Google Groups thread in 2012, she promised candy to her students if they and their parents filled out a Google non-disclosure agreement and release form relating to a research study Google appeared to have already conducted on her students to better understand how students and teens used the company’s products.⁴⁵



Wojcicki & Google help spawn an “EdTech” industry, aided by taxpayer funding

Following Google’s Teacher Academy pilot projects in 2006 and 2007, the one-day workshops rapidly evolved into a sophisticated, full-scale “professional development” program for teachers.

In 2008, Google expanded its partnership with CUE, hosting CUE’s board meeting at Google’s Mountain View headquarters that May, according to the nonprofit’s internal board minutes.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁴ <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:5SpPLoXO8eEJ:gawker.com/5077981/googler-mom-esther-wojcickis-sideline-job-as-google-publicist+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

⁴⁵ <https://archive.fo/9qeCR>

⁴⁶ https://web.archive.org/web/20170615033238/http://www.cue.org/sites/cue.org/files/static/cue_files/02CUEBoardMinutesMay2008.pdf

meeting was hosted by Anna Bishop and Tina Ornduff, two Google executives responsible for education outreach.⁴⁷

While Google's initial pilot program was free to educators, CUE's board minutes signaled a significant new development. Google had approved an expansion of the program but required future teacher training seminars to be funded by local education agencies (LEAs) or county offices of education (COEs)—in other words, taxpayers.

In essence, Google had scored two major coups; it simultaneously turned teachers into its most effective sales force and got school districts to help foot the bill

Wojcicki's and Google's first innovation was to bypass school boards and administrators by recruiting teachers directly as product "evangelists." The second innovation was to transfer the costs of Google's marketing blitz to school districts by tapping into professional development budgets for technology training. In that way, the company could avoid the expense of conducting hundreds of teacher-training seminars around the country. In essence, Google had scored two major coups; it simultaneously turned teachers into its most effective sales force and got school districts to help foot the bill.

At that point, Google training and certification seminars took off. CUE added 30 training sessions in 2009, 53 in 2010, and 53 in 2011.⁴⁸ New programs were added, including the Google Workshop for Administrators and the YouTube Workshop for Educators.⁴⁹

New specialty training programs were also added to the curriculum, such as the Google Faculty Institute to train secondary teachers in math and science on Google products. Programs included "fireside chats" with Wojcicki and "EdTech evangelists" from Google.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/anbishop/?ppe=1>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tina-ornduff-23a486/>

⁴⁸ <https://sites.google.com/a/cuetoyou.net/gwe/events/past-events>

⁴⁹ [https://web.archive.org/web/20090606170557/http://www.cue.org/stories/storyReader\\$614,http://ywe.cuetoyou.net/](https://web.archive.org/web/20090606170557/http://www.cue.org/stories/storyReader$614,http://ywe.cuetoyou.net/),

<https://web.archive.org/web/20090813192246/https://sites.google.com/site/cuegli/>

⁵⁰ <https://sites.google.com/site/gfiredux/home/agenda>



**EdTech Team Founder
Mark Wagner**

CUE marketing materials promised to bring “Google Workshops” to schools for \$250 per participant, paid either by the “host organization” (individual schools or school districts) or by teachers themselves, who could conveniently “sign up and pay via credit card online.”⁵¹

The move to tap school districts’ professional development budgets spawned a gold rush among educators and administrators looking to cash in on school districts’ technology craze. New websites such as EdTechReview sprung up to discuss the services of EdTech consultants and trainers.⁵² Blogs provided advice on how to leverage teaching experience into consulting gigs with EdTech companies.⁵³

Mark Wagner, a former education technology coordinator for the Orange County, California, Department of Education, may have been one of the first to capitalize on the trend.⁵⁴ Wagner, who left his Orange County post in 2006 to start the Educational Technology and Life Corporation, later EdTechTeam,⁵⁵ contracted with CUE to provide Google training through a program called CUETOYou—an increasingly important source of revenue for the nonprofit.⁵⁶ (A report by CUE’s treasurer at a May 2010 board meeting noted, “[B]right spot in the budget is CUETOYou income.”⁵⁷)

Wagner’s early marketing materials noted that he was an approved professional development provider for the California K12 Voucher program, which reimbursed professional development costs to school districts in the state with funds recovered from California’s antitrust settlement with Google’s competitor, Microsoft.⁵⁸

By 2011, Wagner’s report to CUE’s board noted that more than 3,300 educators had attended CUETOYou training events and that his team had grown to 75 employees. Wagner also told the board that the program was expanding to schools internationally.⁵⁹ From 2008 through the end of 2015, CUE reported hosting more than 185 Google teacher training conferences in the US and internationally, including seminars in Austria, Singapore and Switzerland.⁶⁰

⁵¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20091117201829/http://www.cue.org/cuetoyou/google>

⁵² <http://edtechreview.in/contribute/edtech-trainers-and-consultants>

⁵³ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-chang/help-im-a-teacher-how-do-_b_5312561.html

⁵⁴ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/markdouglaswagner/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.manta.com/c/mb03mh5/edtechteam>

⁵⁶ <https://edtechlife.com/cue-2007-session-submissions/> (see “Full disclosure”);

<https://fusiontables.google.com/DataSource?docid=1bH54TWSgZetiImIzEe4hM7iHbmWJlylqTtEmSBM#rows:id=1>; <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/cueprint>

⁵⁷ https://web.archive.org/web/20140702055411/http://cue.org/sites/cue.org/files/static/cue_files/5210.pdf

⁵⁸ https://web.archive.org/web/20071016182453/http://edtechlife.com/?page_id=1356#pd,

<https://sites.google.com/site/rushtonsresources/home/k12-voucher-for-california-schools>

⁵⁹ https://web.archive.org/web/20170615070318/http://www.cue.org/sites/cue.org/files/4_7_11.pdf

⁶⁰ <https://sites.google.com/a/cuetoyou.net/gwe/events/past-events>

Today, Wagner’s EdTechTeam conducts Google certification programs for teachers in 26 states and 23 countries, producing professional development programs in nine languages for over 50,000 educators a year.⁶¹

Other tech companies have gotten in on the game as well. Apple now uses EdTechTeam to train teachers on iPads and Macs.⁶² Microsoft also partners with EdTechTeam and several other EdTech vendors to offer its own teacher training programs.⁶³

A Google search of school board documents and minutes shows hundreds of links to contracts and proposals for EdTechTeam training seminars on Google and other technology companies’ products.⁶⁴ In many cases, school districts are paying tens, or even hundreds, of thousands of dollars a year to subsidize EdTechTeam’s tech marketing to the classroom.

In 2016, for example, the Shaker Heights School District in Ohio paid \$22,950 to EdTechTeam, which set up a pilot program to train teachers on Google Apps for Education.⁶⁵ San Francisco Public Schools paid \$67,500 in 2017 and \$88,000 in April 2018 to EdTechTeam for consultant services.⁶⁶ Two months later in June 2018, SFPS awarded another \$28,000 contract to the company.⁶⁷

In 2017, Kentucky’s Jefferson County Board of Education awarded a sole-source, non-competitive contract valued at \$84,560 to EdTechTeam to train 300 teachers and school administrators on Google products.⁶⁸ A year later, it awarded a \$63,000 contract to AmplifiedIT, another Google for Education “premier partner,” to move the school district to Google Cloud.⁶⁹

A 2017 EdTechTeam proposal to the Pulaski County Board of Education in Arkansas proposed two back-to-back Google for Education summits for \$148,350.⁷⁰ It is unclear if the proposal was approved, although the school district’s Chief Technology Officer recommended approval. In 2018, Canada’s Greater Victoria School District in British Columbia awarded a \$43,325 contract to EdTechTeam Canada. That November the contractor hosted its “2018 Tech for Learning Summit” in partnership with the school district.⁷¹

⁶¹ <http://erlc.ca/programs/details-6181.php> (See “Information”)

⁶² <https://www.edtechteam.com/apple/>

⁶³ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/training-and-events/trainers/default.aspx>

⁶⁴ <https://www.google.com/search?q=minutes+%22edtechteam%22+contract+filetype:pdf;>
[https://www.google.com/search?q=minutes+\"edtechteam\"+board+filetype:pdf](https://www.google.com/search?q=minutes+\)

⁶⁵ [http://www.shaker.org/Downloads/FinStmtJan20162.pdf,](http://www.shaker.org/Downloads/FinStmtJan20162.pdf)
<https://sites.google.com/a/shaker.org/shaker-pilot-gafe-resources/home>

⁶⁶ [http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/resolutions-k-board/KB%20WEB%20LOG%2017_DEC_12.pdf,](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/resolutions-k-board/KB%20WEB%20LOG%2017_DEC_12.pdf)
http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/resolutions-k-board/KB%20WEB%20LOG%2018_APR_24.pdf

⁶⁷ http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/resolutions-k-board/KB%20WEB%20LOG%2018_JUN_12.pdf

⁶⁸ <https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting/Attachments/DisplayAttachment.aspx?AttachmentID=398234>

⁶⁹ [https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting/Attachments/DisplayAttachment.aspx?AttachmentID=435694,](https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting/Attachments/DisplayAttachment.aspx?AttachmentID=435694)
<https://www.amplifiedit.com/partner-award-2017/>

⁷⁰ <https://pcssd.s3.amazonaws.com/board-of-education/board-docs-2017-06-15.pdf> (P. 47)

⁷¹ [https://www.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2018/09/September-24-2018-Regular-Agenda-and-Attachments.pdf,](https://www.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2018/09/September-24-2018-Regular-Agenda-and-Attachments.pdf)
<https://edtechteam.swoogo.com/victoria2018/>

Other tech providers such as Microsoft and Apple now have their own education training programs. But it appears they may have been much later to the game: Microsoft “teacher academies” didn’t launch until late 2014, according to web archives.⁷² Apple’s education portal didn’t launch until late 2016, although the company may have had programming before then.⁷³

Access to professional-development funds has spawned thousands of new EdTech competitors as well. Today, the Google for Education website lists more than 4,000 Google for Education Partners, Certified Trainers and Certified Innovators with elite “premier tiers” that receive access to marketing funding, co-marketing opportunities with Google and designated manager support.⁷⁴



Google for Education’s Global EdTech “Premier Partners”⁷⁵

To be sure, Google also shares in the professional development costs for technology training in schools. A study by the University of Chicago (funded by Google, nonetheless) reported that Google and the National Science Foundation continue to be among the largest funders of computer science professional development for teachers.⁷⁶

But the company also devotes considerable resources to ensuring that professional development funds continue to flow to its certification programs. The Google for Education Transformation Center

⁷² https://web.archive.org/web/20141008215946/https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/events/teacher-academies/default.aspx#fbid=pr_xzV1VrYP

⁷³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20161222105306/https://www.apple.com/education/apple-teacher/>

⁷⁴ <https://edudirectory.withgoogle.com/en/results>,

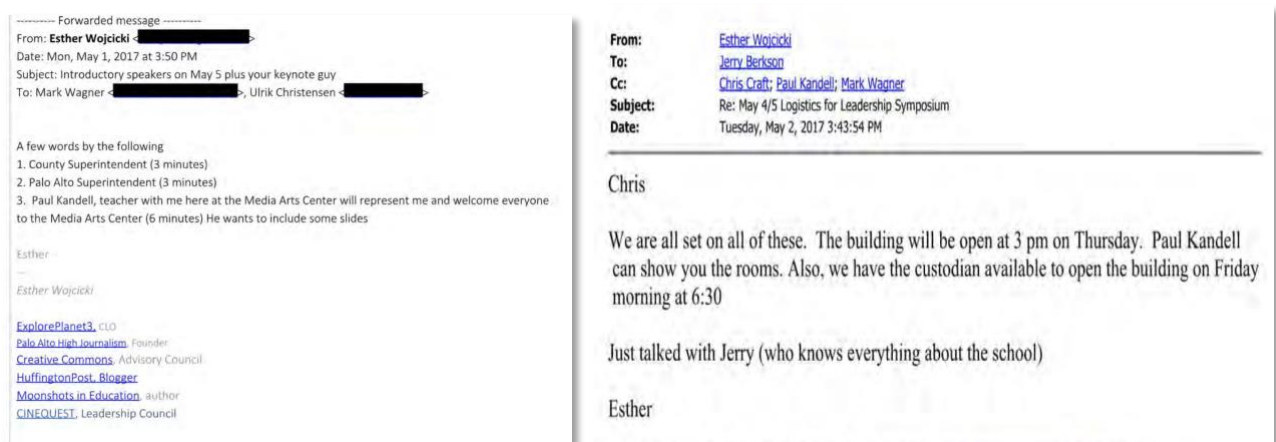
<https://edu.google.com/partners/>

⁷⁵ http://services.google.com/fh/files/misc/globalpdpdpartners_2018.pdf

⁷⁶ <http://outlier.uchicago.edu/computerscience/OS4CS/landscapestudy/>

provides case studies from school districts on how to tap professional development funding for tech training.⁷⁷

And Wojcicki, with her family ties at the very top of Google, continues to work with Wagner and EdTechTeam and has participated as a featured speaker at EdTechTeam events.⁷⁸



Esther Wojcicki and EdTechTeam staff emails planning Los Altos EdTechTeam Leadership Symposium in 2017

Google and EdTechTeam have also joined forces for programs such as the Google Moonshot Summit, an event that brings teachers from around the world to tackle “big hairy audacious goals.”⁷⁹

Like many Google education training programs, evangelism is a key component—the Moonshot Summit application, for example, sought to find out if teachers were “comfortable teaching someone how to collaborate using Google Apps.”⁸⁰

EdTechTeam employees lobby key education officials

Google’s relationships with its EdTech partners has paid other dividends. EdTechTeam employees, who served as classroom teachers, participated in influential education policy working groups while promoting Google’s products. Jennie Magiera, a Chicago fourth grade teacher highlighted in the May 2017 *New York Times* story, provides an interesting example.⁸¹ As reported, Magiera, an advocate for Google Docs in her school district, “occasionally worked as a paid speaker for education technology organizations that train teachers on Google tools.” And in March 2012, after a committee that she was on reviewed presentations from several companies, the Chicago Public Schools adopted Google Apps

⁷⁷ <https://edutransformationcenter.withgoogle.com/framework/funding-sustainability/#/resources>

⁷⁸ <https://leaders.edtechteam.com/ca>

⁷⁹ <https://medium.com/@yonidayan/google-moonshot-summit-is-education-capable-of-big-hairy-audacious-goals-1a6aabb9d36>, <https://www.edtechteam.com/moonshots/>

⁸⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20160617053301/http://www.moonshotsummit.org/application>

⁸¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/13/technology/google-education-chromebooks-schools.html>

for Education, putting all district employees on the same email system and making an array of Google products available in classrooms⁸²

But Magiera's public school work would continue to be intertwined with her advocacy for Google's



EdTechTeam's Jennie Magiera keynotes CUE 2015 Annual Conference

products. A few years later, while she was serving as the Digital Learning Coordinator for the Academy for Urban School Leadership, Magiera was also serving as a "presenter" and keynote speaker for at least a dozen EdTechTeam summits around the world, including events in Iceland, South Africa, South Korea and Thailand.⁸³

Magiera's involvement in a national education policy group raises additional questions about whether she could be objective, given her years connected with Google advocacy. She was a member of the technical

working group for the U.S. Department of Education's 2016 National Education Technology Plan, serving on the panel alongside Google's chief "Internet evangelist," Vint Cerf.⁸⁴ The focus of the plan was "Future Ready Learning: Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education." In July of 2017, Magiera left the Des Plaines school system to become EdTechTeam's Chief Program Officer.⁸⁵

EdTechTeam's current Director of Partnerships, Chris Craft, provides yet another example of the way evangelists for Google's education products work, at the same time, in the public school system and participate, as educators, in national education events.⁸⁶ Craft, a former middle school teacher for the Lexington-Richland School District in Columbia, South Carolina, joined EdTechTeam in mid-2014 as the company's "director of online learning," according to an archived web page of the EdTechTeam website.⁸⁷

⁸² https://cps.edu/News/Press_releases/Pages/03_27_2012_PR1.aspx

⁸³ <https://sites.google.com/a/gafesummit.com/on/2014/presenters> (Ontario, Canada),

<https://sites.google.com/a/gafesummit.com/kr/presenters> (South Korea),

<https://sites.google.com/a/gafesummit.com/ca/oc/presenters> (Orange County, CA),

<https://sites.google.com/a/gafesummit.com/za/2015/presenters> (South Africa),

<https://nvite.com/EdTechTeam/b146> (Reykjavik, Iceland),

<https://iossummits.com/za/> (South Africa),

<http://professionallearninghub.com/events/ed-tech-team-for-google-thailand-summit/> (Thailand),

<https://sites.google.com/a/gafesummit.com/sg/2014/presenters> (Singapore),

<https://10times.com/edtechteam-summit-burlington> (Burlington, MA),

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HVZLpFXSRxscyPc3At2LkLoUe0BrdZ3kpfaKqJqn3i8/mobilebasic> (Las Vegas, NV),

<http://www.abouttimeandbeyond.com/2016/> (Augusta, ME),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWSWyvW2GFM> (Palm Springs, CA)

⁸⁴ <https://tech.ed.gov/files/2015/12/NETP16.pdf> (P. 95)

⁸⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/magiera/>

⁸⁶ <https://www.edtechteam.com/team/chriscraft/>

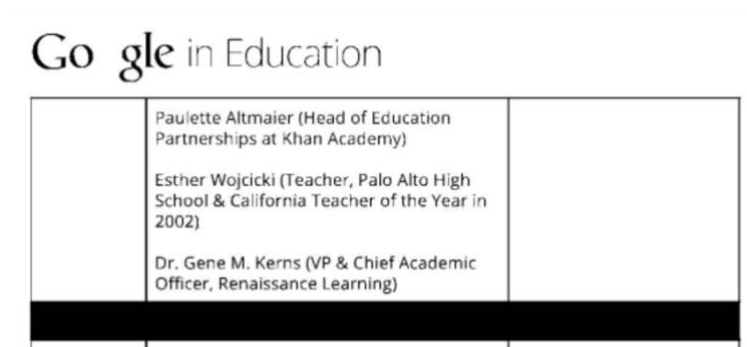
⁸⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christophcraftsc/>; <https://web.archive.org/web/20140630213220/https://www.edtechteam.com/team/>

At the time, Craft was still employed by the district, according to his LinkedIn profile.⁸⁸ In addition to serving as EdTechTeam’s director of online learning, Craft worked with Palmetto Learning until at least 2015, offering “professional development” training to teachers for Google’s education products.⁸⁹

As with Magiera, EdTechTeam’s connections with Craft has paid dividends far beyond local school districts: During the Obama administration, Craft was selected from more than a thousand applicants to join a group of 20 teachers to meet with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Dr. Jill Biden at the White House.⁹⁰

In another episode that illustrates the reach of Google and EdTechTeam at the highest levels of education policy, an Obama education fellow who was friendly with Google helped the company arrange a high-level event at its Mountain View headquarters and was hired by EdTechTeam for a top job less than a year later.

Emails obtained under an open records request show that Jim Sanders, a White House Presidential Fellow,⁹¹ appears to have helped Google’s Jaime Casap arrange for Department of Education technology director Richard Culatta to participate in a Google education symposium in November 2013.⁹² The event at Google’s Mountain View headquarters gathered education ministers and secretaries from 11 countries to discuss technology in the classroom. Esther Wojcicki was on hand as well to discuss “Innovative new learning models” in the classroom.⁹³



Casap was particularly interested in having Culatta discuss “PD,” a probable reference to the hundreds of professional development seminars Google was beginning to host through EdTechTeam, and “EDU policy,” according to the email exchange.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christophercraftsc/>

⁸⁹ <http://amyarcher.weebly.com/uploads/5/2/0/3/52035101/gaetcpprogram2015.pdf>

⁹⁰ <http://www.christophercraft.com/about.html>

⁹¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamestsanders/>

⁹² <https://www.linkedin.com/in/culatta/>

⁹³ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2837300-DOCS-DOE-15-00699-F-Culatta.html#search/p91/Wojcicki>

⁹⁴ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2837300-DOCS-DOE-15-00699-F-Culatta.html#search/p54/Fiber> P.54

On Nov 5, 2013, at 11:57 AM, "Jaime Casap" <jcasap@google.com> wrote:

Hey guys,

Once you guys confirm, we can set up the conversations that make sense - PD, Fiber, EDU policy, etc on that Monday.

Also, one of the reasons we need to know ASAP is so we can make sure we have hotel reservations booked for you. Let us know if you are coming Sunday or Monday and for how many nights.

After hearing from Casap, Sanders replied the same afternoon: “Richard is going to be able to fly out for the event!”⁹⁵

On Tue, Nov 5, 2013 at 2:16 PM, Sanders, James <James.Sanders@ed.gov> wrote:
Jaime and Michael,

Richard is going to be able to fly out for the event! Unfortunately, I'm currently heads down on a few major initiatives and will not be able to make the trip.

Richard is going to fly out Sunday and would love an opportunity to meet with the various Google EDU teams working on items pertinent to the President's education agenda. **He's going to keep his calendar completely open on Monday to accommodate any potential meetings.** Please let me know if I can be of help in helping set these meetings up.

Best of luck on the event!

In October 2014, less than a year after Sanders appears to have helped Google arrange the talk, EdTechTeam hired him as the company's Chief Information Officer.⁹⁶

Google Certified Teacher program raises conflict of interest questions

The details of the financial relationships that Google's EdTech consultants and resellers have with teachers and administrators are murky. But it is clear that teachers are being aggressively co-opted to market Google products to classrooms.

As *The New York Times* reported in September 2017, the practice of recruiting underpaid teachers to push EdTech products in exchange for consulting gigs in many ways echoes the now widely discredited practice of pharmaceutical companies rewarding physicians with paid speaking gigs in the hopes the paid physicians will frequently prescribe their medications to patients.⁹⁷

For public school employees in particular, the lack of transparency or disclosure raises additional questions about potential conflicts of interest, including whether teachers' decisions in the classroom

⁹⁵ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2837300-DOCS-DOE-15-00699-F-Culatta.html#search/p63> P.63

⁹⁶ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamestsanders/>

⁹⁷ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/health/ct-met-doctor-pharma-payments-20110927-story.html>

may be inappropriately influenced by the promise of a lucrative consulting contract with Google or its EdTech suppliers. “Any time you are paying a public employee to promote a product in the public classroom without transparency, then that’s problematic,” James Tierney, a former Maine attorney general told the Times.⁹⁸

The wide network of EdTech consultancies provides cover not only for Google, but often for the educators under its influence. School district records show transactions with EdTechTeam, for example, which doesn’t sound as nefarious as contracting with Google. Teachers can list CUE or Kiker Learning, another Google reseller, as a sponsor, obscuring the profit motive that a direct association with Google might suggest.⁹⁹

In most cases, teachers and administrators appear to contract directly with Google’s EdTech partners. In New Jersey, which appears to be one of the few states to require its education employees to file personal financial disclosure statements, several statements from employees list outside income in excess of \$2,000 from Google resellers such as EdTechTeam and Kiker Learning.¹⁰⁰

But while some New Jersey school administrators take pains to report outside income from EdTech companies, many others may not. Jeff Bradbury for instance, a technology specialist with New Jersey’s Westwood Regional School District, has no personal disclosure statement on file with the New Jersey Department of Education.¹⁰¹ As a “Garden State Summit” presenter for Google Education products as well as a coordinator for instructional technology for the school district, Bradbury has been instrumental in transitioning the district to Google Classroom and G Suite for Education.¹⁰²

Bradbury is also the founder of the TeacherCast Educational Network, a popular website and podcast offering educational information on technology as well as “coaching support.”¹⁰³ The site boasts dozens, if not hundreds, of blog posts and reviews of Google education products as well as products by Microsoft, Apple and other EdTech companies.¹⁰⁴ A “media kit” on the website boasts of Bradbury’s “7 years of experience working with globally recognized educational technology companies” and asks, “Is your brand ready to be amplified?”¹⁰⁵ Whether Google or other tech companies are sponsors of his podcast is unclear, as Bradbury provides no disclosures.

⁹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/technology/silicon-valley-teachers-tech.html>

⁹⁹ <https://sites.google.com/view/kikerlearning/home>

¹⁰⁰ <https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/ethics/discforms.php?c=25;d=2230;s=177011;dl=20170201;>

<https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/ethics/discforms.php?c=25;d=2230;s=202988;dl=20180201;>

<https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/ethics/discforms.php?c=27;d=5660;s=144763;dl=20150601>

¹⁰¹ [https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/ethics/reportsearch.php?showname=Bradbury&lname=&dist_code=&button.x=10&button.y=9&button=Go%21.](https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/ethics/reportsearch.php?showname=Bradbury&lname=&dist_code=&button.x=10&button.y=9&button=Go%21)

¹⁰² <http://www.gardenstatesummit.com/schedule;>

https://www.wrrsd.org/cms/lib/NJ01000230/Centricity/Domain/3/State_of_Technology-WWRS-D-Jan2018.pdf

¹⁰³ <https://www.teachercast.net/>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.google.com/search?q=google+site%3Ahttps%3A%2F%2Fwww.teachercast.net;>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=apple%20site%3Ahttps%3A%2F%2Fwww.teachercast.net;>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=microsoft%20site%3Ahttps%3A%2F%2Fwww.teachercast.net;>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.teachercast.net/media-kit/>

In addition to serving as consultants and contractors to Google's EdTech resellers, teachers may also be contracting directly with Google. An intriguing warning on the Google for Education Teacher Center notes that violation of the company's non-disclosure policies can result in Google choosing to "terminate any applicable business relationship" with its teacher trainers.¹⁰⁶

Google funding of television programs promoting technology in the classroom

Google has invested heavily in other education programs as well, underwriting television programs and documentaries lauding technology in the classroom.

The WestEd-Google partnership included a Google-sponsored video channel aimed at educators called the Infinite Thinking Machine, described as an "a high-energy Internet TV show directly targeted at K-12 educators, parents and students... that inspires creativity and innovation in education."¹⁰⁷ In reality, the video channel effectively served as a vehicle for Google to push its new education products to teachers.¹⁰⁸

Beginning in 2010, The Sergey Brin and Anne Wojcicki Foundation joined other tech-connected foundations in funding Learning Matters, Inc., a video production non-profit founded by longtime PBS education correspondent John Merrow.¹⁰⁹ The program was also the recipient of a Google Grant award, according to a 2012 post on their website.¹¹⁰

In early 2011, Esther Wojcicki became chairman of the board of Learning Matters.¹¹¹ Shortly after, the nonprofit ramped up programming focused on the benefits of tech in the classroom. An October 8, 2013, segment hosted by PBS' Judy Woodruff highlighted NYC Gentech, a partnership between the New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship.¹¹²

The partnership hosted an "App Camp" for New York students in which mentors from companies like Google and Microsoft coached students competing in teams on how to create phone apps.¹¹³ In addition to the executives' foundation funding for Learning Matters, Google was also a sponsor of NYC Gentech.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ https://teachercenter.withgoogle.com/certification_faq

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.infinite-thinking.org/>; <https://edtechlife.com/the-infinite-thinking-machine/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://googleblog.blogspot.com/2007/03/coffee-talk-in-teachers-lounge.html>

¹⁰⁹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20100507024905/http://learningmatters.tv:80/blog/about-us/funders/83/>

¹¹⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20120221090209/http://learningmatters.tv:80/blog/about-us/funders/83/>

¹¹¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110819224455/http://learningmatters.tv/blog/about-us/board/81/>

¹¹² <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/education-of-michelle-rhee/credits/>

¹¹³ <http://learningmatters.tv/transcripts/newshour/appcamp.pdf>

¹¹⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20151002131108/http://nycgenerationtech.com:80/partners/>

In 2015, Merrow's Learning Matters released an hour-long PBS documentary titled "School Sleuth: The Case of the Wired Classroom."¹¹⁵ The lighthearted film noir production, in which Merrow played a detective discussing education technology with his bartender co-host, appears to be a subtler approach to influence educators and parents about the benefits of technology in the classroom.

The documentary included segments on the promise of educational video games and "hi-tech kindergartens," and was interspersed with interviews of teachers and administrators from around the country extolling the promise of technology in the classroom. Google's financial sponsorship of Learning Matters was never disclosed.

Merrow praised the Los Altos School District neighboring Google's Mountain View headquarters for budgeting \$350,000 annually in teacher professional development and technology training seminars—the same seminars that Google was aggressively marketing through its teacher certification programs.

"Kids as creators, not consumers," Merrow's bartender co-host remarked ironically. "Computers aren't ruining schools, they can make them better!"¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ <https://www.pbs.org/video/school-sleuth-case-wired-classroom-full-episode/>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.pbs.org/program/school-sleuth-wired-classroom/> (@ 38:36)