Google Docs

Use in the Traditional Classroom

Jeanne Canale, Adjunct Faculty
Middlesex Community College
Why Google Docs?

• Expand collaborative learning.
• Helps promote group work and peer editing skills.
• Monitor student progress via an interactive process.
• Stay organized.
• Get feedback easily anytime/anywhere.
Example Exercises

Documents
- Essays (individual or co-edited)
- Collaborative research papers
- Journals

Spreadsheets
- Flowcharts and Forms
- Graphs, charts, maps, and data presentation techniques

Presentations
- Presenting group research
- Active student participation during a presentation
Collaboration

• Multiple editors.
• Real time editing.
• Co-authoring.
• Shared tasks.
• Harmonious interaction/less arguments.
• Produced better presentations that all team members were proud of.
Assessment

• Mark-up less and often.

• Assed Learning w/target setting (due dates) throughout the process.

• Focus on students understanding the lesson/exam skills.

• Continuous feedback on content of both my lessons and revisions.
What were the wins and what were the fails?

**Wins:**

• All of the groups managed to edit a document in real time and could see how this speeded up the process.

• All of the students quickly familiarized themselves with the Google docs interface, and I heard almost no complaints about it. In fact, some students said that they preferred it to PowerPoint.
What were the wins and what were the fails? (continue)

Fails:
• Some of the groups failed to work together effectively.
• The nature of editing one document for submission threw up a variety of issues including concerns over trust, ownership and effort.
• Still did not alleviate human factors – what happens when someone does not pull their weight?
Some Final Thoughts

If you are thinking about using Google docs to foster collaboration between your students then:

• Spend some time with them discussing what it means to edit another student’s work.

• Model collaborative editing with them – show them that it is okay to edit, delete, change, improve each others work.

• Have them complete some shorter, smaller tasks to get used to the idea of changing one another’s work.

• Group your students by similar ability so as not to draw attention to differences in ability.

• Definitely have your students add you as a collaborator. (This was the biggest win for me) as it allows you to effectively support your students throughout the process.
Final Reflections

What Google Docs brings to the classroom:

• A system fit for the purpose, and also evolving at the same time.
• Not dependent on a specific browser or operating system, and requires no extra knowledge to use it.
• Easy to sign up for, and works with any web browser.
• Is inclusive, and free.