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VICKI: Happy Five Idea Friday, we're talking to John Sowash [@rsowash](#) from Michigan about five ideas to amp up Chromebook. John, what's your first idea?

JOHN: Hi Vicki, I love to use Chromebooks for formative assessments, using devices to collection actionable data is the key here. Now, collecting the data is easy, there's tools like Google Forms forms.google.com , Socrative, <https://www.socrative.com/> Quizizz <https://quizizz.com/> , Kahoot, <http://getkahoot.com> but make sure you spend time analyzing and using that data intelligently to improve your instruction.

VICKI: Oh my goodness, can you give us a quick tip on how we should analyze? Just go in and look at it?

JOHN: Yeah, absolutely. So most of the time it's going to end up in a spreadsheet and I like Google Sheets <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/0/> and so I love Flubaroo <http://www.flubaroo.com/> which helps me identify low scoring questions and student show are struggling. And then I also like the new explore feature in Sheets that allow to see trends in the data. *(Editor's Note: Check out this Tech Republic Article for information on the Explore feature <http://www.techrepublic.com/article/how-to-use-the-new-google-explore-feature/>)*

VICKI: Awesome. What's your second idea?

JOHN: So multimedia is my next tip. We learn best when we create and so I love getting students to create with Chromebooks. I challenge them to demonstrate their learning by creating videos and audio and image projects and for that I love using Canva <http://www.canva.com> , ThingLink <https://www.thinglink.com/> , PowToon <https://www.powtoon.com/> , YouTube Editor <https://www.youtube.com/editor> is great. And then also a cool one called Booktrack Classroom. <https://www.booktrackclassroom.com/content/intro>

VICKI: Tell us what Booktrack does.

JOHN: That one is new. Just copy and paste something you've written, you paste it into Booktrack Classroom and then it allows you to add sound effects, background music, explosions, crowd noises, audio, all kinds of cool stuff.

VICKI: Cool. Okay, that's the third?

JOHN: So I love the idea of station learning. Now, elementary teachers are really good at this but it's a teaching method that really can be applied in middle and high school as well and this is especially helpful for school that aren't one-to-one. So you're going to set up five to seven stations in your classroom. Some of them can be technology or Chromebooks, they don't all have to be. And at each station, students

visit for five to seven visits, maybe a group of three to five students in different activities there. So it's a great way to get technology into their hands even if you don't have enough for every kid.

VICKI: Okay. So Chromebooks can be at one of the station and then you can have other things in the other ones.

JOHN: Absolutely.

VICKI: Cool. Okay, what's our fourth?

JOHN: So number four is screen casting. And I really think that screen casting is an essential skill for everyone. This is a great way, again, to get your students creating with Chromebooks. They can create tutorials for each other, they can take a screen cast or something that's in progress. If they're coding it's kind of hard to turn in something that's not finish but they can show you what they've done so far through the screen cast. It's really an essential 21st century skill.

My personal favorite – there's lots out there but I really like Screencastify <https://www.screencastify.com/> which works really good with Chromebooks.

VICKI: Cool. And you know what? I teach coding and I could not live without screencast. I mean, I just couldn't do it, it's not possible to go and check everybody's screen. Okay, what's number five here?

JOHN: So lectures frequently get a bad rap, everybody was like, "Don't lecture, don't lecture." But lectures can be very effective in structural strategy. The key is to make sure that you're actively engaging your students. And I love using Pear Deck to do that. It's a super easy tool to use, you can actually import your PowerPoint or even your Google Slide presentations right into Pear Deck <https://www.peardeck.com/> and then integrates multiple choice, short answer or even interactive activities. If you've got touchscreen Chromebooks there's a drawing tool that you can use with it, it's super easy and again it gets students actively engaged into the class.

VICKI: So John, you've given us all these create ideas. But what do you think are the biggest mistake teaches make when we get all these Chromebooks and we're looking at them. How do we fall on our faces?

JOHN: I think the biggest mistake that teachers make is feeling obligated to use the technology especially in a one-to-one situation. Teachers feel, "Hey, the kids have these devices, we have to use them every time." Sometimes, the best thing to do is to put the devices away to actually have a non-tech day, and for some students that will be a big change and could kind of be shock that might get them talking to one another and learning more effectively.

VICKI: Wow. So sometimes we just need to put it aside, huh?

JOHN: Yeah. I'm a big fan of using the tool that fits the need. And Google Docs <http://docs.google.com> is great but you could also just turn to your neighbor and

talk. And so make sure that you're using technology in ways that enhances the conversation, not just duplicate paper or analog-based strategy.

VICKI: Okay. John. So a teacher gets Chromebooks for the first time and you've probably named 20 or 30 apps. What's a quick win or two? Some apps besides, of course, Google Docs and Google Sheets and all that, but some quick wins that a teacher could get under their belt.

JOHN: So I have a list of essential skills that teachers and students need to be able to do on a Chromebook. So you need to be able to edit an image, create a video project, create an audio recording – those are some key ones. And so I guess what I would say is for image editing I personally like something called Pixlr <https://pixlr.com/> which is great. For audio recording I like SoundTrap <https://www.soundtrap.com/> and then for video there's a couple – either PowToon, WeVideo <https://www.wevideo.com/> or honestly the YouTube video editor all work really well. So those are three kinds of essential skills that I think teachers and students need to have under the belt.

VICKI: Okay. So before we finish, there are so many people struggling because you got iPads, you got Chromebooks, you got laptops, you got all these choices. What is the Chromebook best for?

JOHN: Chromebook is best for living on the web, it is a web first device and really, honestly, the coolest thing about a Chromebook is how unremarkable it is. Almost everything you can do on a Chromebook you could also do on an iPad, a PC, a Mac. And that's the idea. It's what you need, it's always there but it doesn't overburden you with extra features and bells and whistles that you probably don't even take advantage of.

VICKI: So John, you've given us so many resources and I know that people who love Chromebooks are going to be asking about you. And we'll be putting all your bio information in the show notes and also I'll be adding your information to my 100 plus, Google Classroom tools and tips. But we're also doing a giveaway. So tell us what we're giving away today.

JOHN: Yeah, I'm excited to offer your listeners a couple of copies of my book, it's called the *Chromebook Classroom*.

VICKI: Cool. So we are going to be giving away the *Chromebook Classroom*.

(Editor's Note: The giveaway is here: <https://gleam.io/Qx8xR/10minute-teacher-giveaway-the-chromebook-classroom-book-by-john-sowash>)

Remember to check all of the details of the giveaway on the blog post that will accompany this. But just head over to Stitcher or to iTunes, leave a review and include your Twitter or your Instagram handle so that we can reach you. And I have a Chromebook and I love it. But John is right, you do have to have access to the

internet, but it's such powerful tool and they're just not that expensive. So I hope you'll check it out.

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