



Title: Kindergarteners and Chromebooks - Yes #Gafe4littles works

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Vicki: When I was at ISTE this past summer, I heard so much about Christine Pinto @PintoBeans11 and #GAfE4Littles. People are really getting excited, Christine, about using Google Apps for Education with really young kids. First of all, how do you define “Littles,” and what can you actually do with Google Apps and young children?

Christine: Well, first, Vicki, thank you for inviting me to share about #GAfE4Littles and I'm just so amazed at what the kids can do. I've had two classes that I've done #GAfE4Littles with, and they just keep blowing my mind from... In the beginning, we are literally going over the basics of just even how to navigate on a Chromebook. And then at the end of the year, this past year, my kids were creating websites.

Vicki: And how old are your students?

Christine: I'm a kindergarten teacher in Arcadia in California, and my kids are five and six years old.

Vicki: You have five and six year olds building web sites?

Christine: Yes. That still blows me away because I created my first website in college.

Vicki: Yeah. And some people would say, “Can all kindergarteners even read?”

Christine: That's something that I talk about frequently. In the beginning, the kids are still developing, being able to recognize letters. That logging in part, for most people are like, "How are they supposed to log in?"

I guess a tip for that is I've put some colored tape on the left side of the keyboard, and it corresponds with the login card on the Q-W-E-R-T-Y. That is my green row. Actually, the red row is the one on top, the one with the numbers.

On the login card, it has... So if it was the number two that they need to type, the number two would have a red in the background and they have to go look for the red piece of tape and look in that row for the number two.

They can definitely match letters and numbers, and so it's all about working with the skills that the kids do have. In the beginning of the school year, they're reading very few words. Like I mentioned, it's just a matter of working with the skills that they do have.

Vicki: Oh, that is so awesome. So, they're building websites, which does completely blow my mind. What do you start with?

Christine: Well, last year, on the first day of school we, like I said, we literally just went over the parts of a Chromebook. I have a lot of English learners, so I can't take for granted that they know even the basic vocabulary, like the screen, and the keyboard, and the trackpad, and what all those do.

I just created a brace map at the beginning where it takes each section apart, just those three parts. We talked about that. They start with logging in and then after that, I do everything through Google Classroom. Google Classroom is our hub, even if we are using a different tool, I'll have the kids start in Google classroom just because I can share links and stuff like that, that way.

But their first activity is usually either in Google Slide or Google Drawing. They're taking a selfie, inserting some shapes and changing the color, typing their name. Just becoming familiar with the different icons, understanding how to take a snapshot because they are going to be using that for other activities. In the beginning, it's a lot of exploring. Because believe it or not, that whole thing of changing the color of something or inserting shapes -- that leads into activities where it involves those skills academically.

Vicki: Do you feel like it helps them learn faster? Or some people might say, "Oh you're just distracting them from basic skills."

Christine: Well, to be honest when I started... I started teaching about a year and a half ago and so...

Vicki: So this is all you've ever known, huh?

Christine: Pretty much. Pretty much. I started with my transitional kindergarteners. And they were four and five. That was my first class. And so they were using before... We would go to the computer lab, and they would be playing some educational games. But after a month and a half, that got real old for me. I'm like, "Ugh, we're going to go to the computer lab again and they're going to go play a game." That was great for developing the mouse skills, and just for them to practice some basic academic skills.

But I knew that they could be creating. I don't think it helps them learn faster. I'm able to tailor some activities to adapt it for different kids. I think it's a supplemental tool. It's another way to explore what they're learning about, another way to create. That's all technology is, it's just another tool.

Vicki: What kind of feedback are you getting from other kindergarten teachers or those who observe your classroom? Because this is almost, this is a pretty shocking way to continue kindergarten compared to traditional kindergarten, right?

Christine: I suppose so. In the beginning, when I started using Google Apps with the kids, that was the response I was getting back. "You're using this for kindergarteners? You're using this with little kids?"

My mindset is, "Well, we have devices, and they have Google accounts, so why not?" I didn't understand what the big deal was about that.

Vicki: (laughs)

On Twitter and everything, when teachers come across the hash tag #GAfE4Littles, a lot of them been really excited. I've had coaches contact me and say that they've been wondering how this gets implemented with little kids, and they want to learn more. As far as within my district, my district is very supportive of everything with #GAfE4Littles, and I've had opportunities to share with other teachers and facilitate discussions just about integrating technology with little kids. My kids are one-on-one with Chromebooks, and so I'm very excited and very happy about that, just because I know that's not how it is everywhere.

Vicki: Have you made a mistake with using Google Apps? Or something you would do differently now?

Christine: Last year was... Because before, when I was working with the TK kids, we only had access to about six devices. It was always small groups with Google Apps unless we went to the computer lab. However, this past year, it was a new adventure to explore how to get all of my kids working on their Chromebooks since we have a whole class set. Because like I mentioned, I was used to doing small groups. So I had to just learn how to have all the kids working at the same time. Because they would drive me nuts if I were to use a small group of kids with their Chromebooks like, "Okay. Now, we're going to..." I'm going to pull the next group and I would have to do that about five times. I'm like, "Why am I doing that if all my kids have devices?"

Vicki: (agrees)

Christine: In the beginning of the year, yeah, we do start out that way but then what I learned... I just tried different seating arrangements. My favorite one is, I call it the "kumbaya" style. They come to the carpet with their Chromebook and they're sitting in a circle so that they can lean over and look to see what their neighbor is doing or help each other out that way. In the beginning of last year, that was a lot of trialing for me, just trying different arrangements and everything. I've taught kindergarten for a year and I do have activities for a year but I'm definitely not probably going to stick to those activities. I'm going to branch out and explore other horizons with the kids.

Vicki: The hashtag is #GAfE4Littles, and Christine Pinto is full of energy!

Here's a thing that I think about with you, Christine, is nobody told you it couldn't be done -- and so you did it. And then after you did it, people were like, "What?" And I know when I found out about #GAfE4Littles, my first thing was like, "Can you use Google Apps with those young kids?" Because people say, "Oh well, you've got to have iPads or you just have to do something else. You can't do it."

And you're really shaking up the paradigm in people's minds about what young kids CAN do. They CAN use Chromebooks, and I just think it's really exciting! I applaud you, Christine, for shaking up the paradigm in your first year and a half of teaching. That's just really incredible.

Christine: Well, thank you, Vicki. It's a mindset thing. It's believing that the kids can, and just by setting that expectation and building skills as we go throughout the year. They're completely capable. I'm a huge advocate for having kids get devices young. I feel so sad and frustrated when I hear, "Oh well, where we're at in my district, we don't start until third grade." I'm like, "No, my kids need to be doing it." If those are my kids, by then, they should be doing extraordinary things instead of learning the basics like my kids are in kindergarten.

Vicki: Let's shake it up. Let's be remarkable and let's not make assumptions about what kids can do. Let's try it and see what they can.

Transcribed by [Kymberli Mulford](#)