

5 Free Tools Early Childhood Leaders Need to Try

By Giovanni Arroyo

Over the years, I have worked as computer tech and technology trainer. At the McCormick Center, I help early childhood leaders learn how to best utilize technology in their programs. Below are five underused tools that I find to be highly beneficial. They can lighten your workload, make sharing items easier, and lessen the time you spend in front of the screen. As I chose these five tools, I did my best to ensure each one is cross-platform. This means that whether you are on a Mac, a Windows, or even a mobile device, these programs will work for you. Plus, all of these tools are free at the basic levels, which offer more than enough features to help you use the internet more efficiently.

Google Drive

Create, share, and collaborate on different document types all in Google Drive. This free application could replace Microsoft® Office allowing you to generate documents, spreadsheets, presentations, forms, and surveys. Drive also integrates well with other Google products you may already be using such as Gmail, Google+, and Hangouts.

IFTTT

Strapped for time? Check out how this nifty tool can help your program automate the many web processes you're doing already. Also known as If This Then That IFTTT allows you to create "recipes", which will automatically perform actions online for you. For example, you could use this tool to ensure that every photo you share on Twitter is also posted to Instagram. There are hundreds of recipe possibilities and IFTTT interacts with sites all over the internet.

Buffer

Buffer makes scheduling posts and sharing web pages or social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn easy. You can share your post right away to all three social media sites. Or, with a few clicks, you can set specific times and days for your posts to be published. It integrates with social media sites so you can share a post or web page at the most efficient time—regardless of when you view it.

Evernote

Evernote is my go-to notetaking app. Installed on every device I own, it allows me to take notes and keep ideas from wherever I may find them—from websites, photos, and more. It is like having a pocket journal in the digital age.

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MailChimp

Do you need a more efficient way to communicate announcements or newsletters to families? MailChimp is an easy-to-use email generating tool with an easy drag and drop interface. Media and blogs are touting the end of email, but we have found that generating leads and sharing program information via email is still the most effective way to communicate with families and colleagues. MailChimp helps make this process simple.

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