Google Classroom for Professional Learning

Everyone with a personal Google account can create a Google Classroom. What this means to professional learning is that educators from different school systems can be brought together through profound professional development experiences.

A Google Class can be created in a matter of minutes. Go to classroom.google.com and sign in (if you're not already signed into Google). If you have multiple Google accounts, be sure you are signed into the one you want to use with the class.

• Click the + at the top of the page and click **Create Class**.

• If you are using a personal Google account, you have to agree not to use the class at school with students.

• **Name** the class. You can leave Section and Subject blank. Click the **Create** button.

• Once your class is created, you have options to select a theme or upload a photo.

As Google Classroom classes are not public, a person must be a member and signed into a Google account. There are two ways to get others to join your class as "students."

One way is to click the **Students** tab and click the **Invite Students** button. Invited students receive an email. Another way for others to join your class is via class code. Your class's code can be found under the **Students** tab. You can click the code and choose **Copy**. Then you can distribute that code through email, online, on paper, or even on a whiteboard.

Professional Learning Possibilities

Once your Google Class is created and participants have joined, there are a number of ways that you and your peers can work together. For example, groups could be gathered to discuss a book. The author could even be invited to virtually speak to the class. Or a Google Classroom could be used to make announcements and share resources as opposed to using group emails. The class can also serve as a repository for memos and documents.

Perhaps a Google Class could be created for a specific event, with handouts and presentations distributed via Google Classroom and participants asking questions and exchanging ideas. And remember: peers from around the world can join the same class. The instructor can post videos, slideshows, documents, links, assignments, quizzes, and discussion questions. After the class is over, it can still remain online as a resource.

Another idea is to award learners digital badges for their efforts. For example, participants could be tasked with creating a specific project to assess their skill with the teacher awarding successful students a graphic that recognizes their accomplishment.

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Google Classroom Fundamentals

Teachers see three tabs across the top of their Google Classroom page: **Stream**, **Students**, and **About**. **Stream** allows you to post questions, assignments and announcements, edit or delete posts, and add class comments, amongst other things. The **Students** tab lets you email and manage students, choose whether students can post or comment, and invite co-teachers. The **About** tab allows teachers to add links and files as well as to view the class calendar and assignments.

Some other things to note:

• Users under 13 years of age cannot join a class with a personal account. They must use a G Suite for Education account.

• Teachers and students can continue to view an archived class's materials, assignments, and posts, but the class cannot be modified unless it is restored.

Since Google Classroom was originally designed for K-12 education, using it for professional learning may require some tweaks and workarounds. Nevertheless, it can provide a powerful foundation for your professional learning efforts.

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