Google Updates Classroom Tools for Remote Learning

New features and tools are rolling out over the next year.

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Google Classroom continues to cater to at-home schooling needs with a series of updates, including better student controls and a simplified workflow for teachers.

When Classroom launched six years ago in an effort to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students, it didn't expect to become the bedrock of education during a global pandemic. Alas, Covid-19 has forced many to adapt to unexpected challenges, and Google is no exception.

"We'll continue to put the people who use our products first and listen to your feedback to address your top priorities," program manager Melanie Lazare wrote in a blog announcement. "And we'll always make sure Classroom retains the simplicity and ease-of-use that's made it so helpful to teachers, students, and school leaders around the world."

Classroom integration

Starting later this year, teachers using Google Workplace for Education Plus or Teaching and Learning Upgrade can use their favorite EdTech tools and content directly inside Classroom — no extra logins required. Simply choose from the content directory and send assignments to students without leaving the virtual school room.

Educators can also expect options to set up classes in advance with Student Information System (SIS) roster syncing and streamline grade entry, as well as gain deeper insights into audit and activity logs.

Hybrid learning

School can be difficult enough when the teacher is standing directly in front of you. Introduce unreliable Zoom meetings, at-home distractions and social isolation, and kids can easily start falling behind. Google wants to help by launching student engagement tracking, allowing educators to see relevant stats like who submitted an assignment or commented on a post on a particular day. It's also updating the Android app to work offline or with intermittent connections.

"We've seen an increase in the number of images uploaded to Classroom — especially from students taking photos of paper assignments," Lazare said. "We're making it easier to attach and submit photos in the Classroom Android app and for teachers to review. Students will be able to combine photos into a single document, crop or rotate images and adjust lighting."

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Simplified workflow

Keep an eye out for Android improvements, including the ability to switch between student submissions, grade while viewing an assignment and share feedback. iOS and web users will also soon be able to customize assignments and posts using rich text formatting — bold, italics, underline, bullets, etc.

Originality reports, meanwhile, will be available in 15

languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Swedish, French, Italian, Indonesian, Japanese, Finnish, German, Korean, Danish, Malay, Hindi), making it easier for instructors to detect potential plagiarism.

“Many of these features were based on your feedback,” according to Lazare. “We hope these features improve your experience as they become available.”

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