

**Annie Brock**

# Introduction to **Google Classroom**

**A Practical Guide for:**

- » **Implementing Digital Education Strategies**
- » **Creating Engaging Classroom Activities**
- » **Building an Effective Online Learning Environment**

**Fully Revised & Updated Edition**



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# The Google Classroom Advantage

As a twenty-first century teacher, you are facing a set of opportunities and challenges that no other teachers in the history of education have encountered. In the last ten years, an explosion of technology has radically changed the educational landscape. This technology has brought with it incredible benefits like more efficient communication, better access to knowledge and resources, and increased student engagement. But because of its relative newness, it's likely your pre-service teaching program did not adequately prepare you to effectively use technology as part of your teaching repertoire.

Today's teachers are poised to change both teaching and learning through integration of technology in the classroom. The business sector thrives on technology—in fact, many of the world's largest companies, like Apple, Microsoft, and Google, produce it. The world has seen massive globalization thanks to the newfound ability to communicate instantaneously across the planet. Just as technology has transformed the way you live, it has the capacity

to transform the way you teach. As the paradigm shifts in other industries, emerging technologies are also offering powerful alternatives to traditional methods of education. Despite these advancements, however, many of today's classrooms look virtually identical to the classrooms of fifty years ago.

Utilizing technology in new and interesting ways in the classroom isn't just important to keeping your teaching style fresh and relevant, it's essential experience for your students who will one day venture out to work and live in this technologically driven world.

Blended learning is the practice of combining face-to-face instruction with online learning experiences. Many school districts are encouraging teachers to incorporate blended learning techniques into the traditional classroom model, in an effort to provide students with a more diverse educational experience. No longer are your students limited to learning only what you know or what the textbook says; rather, they have a limitless amount of information at their fingertips. Thus, the goal of teaching should not only be to impart knowledge, but also to assist students in effectively seeking it out for themselves. In the blended learning model, the teacher acts as a facilitator who guides students to ensure that they access new information in a safe, responsible, and purposeful manner.

As we consider ways to meaningfully incorporate technology in our classrooms, there is no better place to begin than Google's G Suite for Education. You undoubtedly already have a handle on what it means to "google." After all, the company's powerful search engine is the most popular in the world. However, Google has also developed a sophisticated suite of productivity tools and made them available, free of charge, to schools around the globe.

From Gmail (Google's popular email service) to a host of other products like Google Docs (a word processing program), Google Calendar (an electronic scheduling and calendar solution), and Google Drive (a cloud storage service), Google's suite of communication-driven tools allows teachers and students alike to work smarter. Collaboration is king when it comes to Google for Education (GFE). No longer do meaningful learning experiences have to be bound by the four walls of your classroom. Using G Suite for Education, students can work collaboratively with you and each other and access information any time from any device.

For K–12 educators, the built-in creativity, productivity, and communication tools, increased efficiency, and cost-saving capabilities offered by Google provide an incredible opportunity

to meet digital natives where they are and prepare them for life in the modern world. No single tool in the suite is better suited to meeting educational needs than Google Classroom.

At its most basic level, Google Classroom is an app that helps teachers easily and efficiently assign, collect, and return work to students. Of course, you could simply replace these once-analog processes with their digital counterparts, but truly harnessing the power of Google Classroom creates an opportunity to do much more. Classroom can serve as the foundation of your blended learning integration strategy. Google refers to Classroom as “mission control” for your classes; used purposefully, it can be the touchstone for all of the online learning your students will do throughout the year.

You likely already have a system in place to accomplish the tasks of assigning and returning work to students, so why replace that system with Google Classroom? Sure, it can streamline your workflow process, but utilizing Classroom can also enhance your ability to communicate with students, differentiate instruction, and share new concepts and tools in real time. Embedded in the fabric of Google Classroom are new ideas and approaches to education. The focus on a partnership between students and teachers, the tools to access and disseminate valuable information in real time, and the ability to evaluate student progress and give instantaneous feedback make Classroom a game changer.

Aside from these larger implications, Classroom can also impact simple tasks and minor issues by helping to prevent them from becoming major headaches.

Imagine receiving this email:

*To: Ms. Brock*

*From: Frustrated Parent*

*Re: Sam's Essay*

*Dear Ms. Brock,*

*Sam told me he turned in his essay on time and you docked him 10 percent for it being “late.” Can you explain this?*

*Thanks,*

*Frustrated Parent*