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To celebrate the end of the first season of the Ten-minute Teacher podcast on June 16th, we're running a giveaway – the Dash and Dot Robot Wonder Pack from Wonder Workshop. Stay tuned to the end of the show for how to enter.

Google Classroom. Hot new things to try this summer, with Alice Keeler. This is Episode 97.

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Today, we're talking with my favorite Google Classroom guru, Alice Keeler.

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And, Alice, you know, there's some features or some awesome things in Google Classroom <https://classroom.google.com/u/0/h> that teachers really kind of need to get familiar with over the summer. But how do we start? I mean, how do we know what to look for? Because there's so much in Google Classroom?

ALICE: There is so much in Google Classroom, and at the same time there is so little in Google Classroom; which is really the genius of Google Classroom is that it's so simple. So the first thing to look for is three dots. And that's really true in any practice. I mean, you get excited when you see a tiny triangle or three dots, because that's going to tell you there's more features or more things to look at. So when you create an assignment in Google Classroom, one of the things you'll notice is up in the upper hand corner of that assignment are three dots. Now, this is a nerdy brag. When you click on those three dots, the bottom option on there is to copy link. And that was my idea. And so, of course, I think it's a really good idea to help explore Google Classroom because it allows you to connect outside of Google Classroom a little bit more easily. If you're not strictly using Google Classroom, that's how you can combine, say, Schoology and Google Classroom is by copying the link from the assignment and pasting that link into, say, Schoology or whatever other platform you're using.

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Or, when you want to send out an email or invite others to look at it, that copy link is really perfect. And it also loops students right back into like, hey, let's come back and look at this assignment again.

One of the things that we noticed is that students perceive a lot of their work as busy work. Well, it's not busy work, but why do they think it is? Because we do the assignment, we get points, and then we move on to something else. And, really, with the logistics of paper, that's how we had to do it. So when you look at Google Classroom like, how can I keep coming back? How can we make this a cycle of learning, that students feel like they have an opportunity to make a mistake, get some feedback, and come back and work on it some more? Because

students really do want to learn. So a great way to do that is to copy the link to an assignment that students have worked on and later ask students to go back and revisit it, now that feedback has been posted. So look for those three dots in Google Classroom as places where you can get more options.

VICKI: Awesome.

ALICE: The other thing is in Google Classroom, in the bottom left hand corner is a little question mark. And when you click on that question mark, it says some awesome things. It says, what's new? That's the very first thing. So if you want to know new things to explore, Google makes it really easy for you to find some new features and things for your trial. But I have to warn you; a lot of things are kind of hidden and they don't announce them, and they're just kind of sneaking a few features here and there. And all the features are always teacher-requested.

VICKI: Shameless plug here. Tell us where we find out your Google Classroom resources. Because I'm telling everybody they're awesome, so it's not a shameless plug; it's really worth it.

ALICE: Thank you. Appreciate that. Well, first, obviously, I have books. So if you go on to Amazon and look up either Google Classroom or Alice Keeler, I have 50 Things You Can Do with Google Classroom and 50 Things to Go Further with Google Classroom. But if you just go to my website, alicekeeler.com, right up at the top, I have a link that will filter for my Google Classroom posts. Or you can go alicekeeler.com/googleclassroom.

VICKI: Cool. Okay, what other features do we need to try out or learn this summer?

ALICE: I'll tell you; my new favorite thing, really, is the return count in Google Classroom.

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Now, it's been a feature on the app for a little while, but they finally brought it to the desktop version or the Chrome version. And so what you see is it says done and not done when students have or haven't completed work. But now when you return work, it now shows you the number that you have returned, the number that is done, and the number that's not done. And why that's particularly awesome is I don't use Google Classroom to save trees. I didn't get into teaching for trees; I got into it for kids. And so what makes learning better is feedback and interacting with students. And the faster I can interact with students, the more motivated they are, the more they care about my class. So when I return work, I know that I've looked at it, or I've at least seen who's done something, whether or not I've graded it or not.

If students look at it after that point, then it's marked as done, and it counts on the done count. So I know that those two students, if the number was two for done, need to have that worked looked at. And it's not mixed in with students I've already looked at. That was always a little bit of a frustration; I look at a list

of student work, and then I have to try and figure out later, well, who's done it since I looked at it? So if I return first, I can click on that too and it shows me only those two students who have done it since I last looked at it. And that helps me to respond to students faster. And that makes learning better.

VICKI: Oh, and it just makes life easier, doesn't it?

ALICE: It so does. So when today they ask me, why are you returning this? Because I'm telling you; I have seen it, I looked at it, I care about it, I'm not ignoring it.

VICKI: Awesome. And then you can have that back in fourth. Because, honestly, I mean, when teachers grade a first draft, I kind of wonder, well, what's the point? Because the real learning goes on between draft one and draft seven or eight or nine, you know.

ALICE: So true. Hands down; my favorite feature of Google Classroom is private comments. And I notice a lot of teachers aren't aware that that's there.

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So the way to find it is to click on the assignment title of any assignment, and on the left hand side you'll see a roster of students, and click on any student's name, and you'll see on the right hand side is a place to do private comments. But, Vicki, it's not a comment; it's a conversation. And that's where learning really happens, is when students interact with you. And let's look at the research. Really, one of the most important and valuable things in the classroom is a highly qualified teacher. And so when you are interacting with students, that is going to be some of those things that really impact learning the most, because, again, it's a conversation not just a comment that I'm writing on the side of a kid's paper. And that allows students to say, I don't understand this, or can you explain this further, or for you to give some really detailed information that students can then build on.

VICKI: I did not know that feature was there. So do we have any other features that you think they should try this summer?

ALICE: Well, there's a new feature that I just discovered. And, again, I've mentioned there's like some little hidden things. So when I go into the question mark and it says what's new, this is not on the list. In the class comments; so when I post an assignment, what's really cool is that we're able to be a community of learners. The burden of feedback is not always on me. When a kid asks a question, he can ask the class. So there's that class comment on every assignment where students can write a comment or a question or something like that. Now, when you hover over another student's comment, a little reply swoopy shows up. And when you click on the reply swoopy – I don't know if that's a technical word; so it's called a plus mention. And you can do plus mentions in comments in Google Docs and things you've been able to do that. And it's lesser known maybe in Google Classroom. But it puts plus, and then that person's email address for you so that

the reply is directed towards that specific person who posted the question. Now, it's always been an awesome feature, but my problem always has been, I don't have everyone's email address memorized. So how do I do a plus mention when I don't know their email?

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So this has now solved that problem for me so nicely, is when I see a comment, or when a peer sees a peer's comment and they hover over the comment in the class comments, the reply swoopy will automatically add the plus mention. So another great way for us to continue interacting.

VICKI: So as we finish up; you know, one of the challenges that teachers have is they want to play with these features over the summer, but they don't have a class to play with. Do you have a solution for that?

ALICE: That one is a toughie. But, you know, we all have a hobby or something we're interested in, and a new feature in Google Classroom is now people can create a classroom with Gmail and people can join classroom with Gmail. Now, that means it's @gmail.com. Even though our school accounts are Gmail accounts, they're not @gmail.com accounts. So go to gmail.com and log in and then go to classroom.google.com; and if teachers would create a Google Classroom through their Gmail account, they can actually invite peers and friends, just people on Facebook that they know, to say, I'm doing a little training, just trying some stuff out over the summer, who wants to join in. And so now all their friends can try it out with them in a safe environment, because they're not damaging kids trying to figure something out. I'm just joking; of course, you wouldn't be damaging kids by trying something out. Try something out. But you're not doing grades and some new things on that. So using the Gmail account is a really nice way over the summer for teachers to try out some new assignment types with people they know and love.

VICKI: So we've gotten lots of wonderful ideas of things to try. We've got a new resource for you. I'll put her books in the show notes. Follow Alice Keeler. I learn from her. She's kind of my Google Classroom go-to person. So we've given you lots of ideas for the summer. So get out there, try some new things, and be remarkable.

ALICE: Absolutely.

VICKI: On June 16th, we'll finish up season one of the Ten-minute Teacher. So to celebrate, we've partnered with one of my favorite robots for teaching coding – Dash and Dot from Wonder Workshop.

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Go to coolcatteacher.com/wonder and enter to win your very own Wonder Pack from Wonder Workshop. And to learn more about how you can use Dash and Dot to teach programming to kids, aged, kindergarten and up.

Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at coolcatteacher.com/podcast. Never stop learning.

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