

Prioritizing and Supporting Student Well-being

How Microsoft 365 Education* solutions compare with Google Workspace for Education* in supporting student well-being



Executive Summary

Student and staff physical and mental health has been a growing concern over the past two years, and the 2022-2023 school will most likely see those concerns in greater focus. In order to address this issue, schools have been implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, training, and other solutions. SEL is the process in which people develop the essential skills for success in learning, relationships, and life. Successful SEL programs help provide each student with the skills, experiences, support, and resources that they require in order to grow socially, emotionally, and academically despite continued challenges to both of these needs.

“ If we really want all students to leave school having developed certain academic, social, personal, and cultural capacities, we need to think really carefully about whether we as educators are creating the types of experiences that we know from research will help develop those capacities.”¹

— Dr. Dave Paunesku, Senior Behavioral Scientist at Stanford University

Reflect in Microsoft Teams for Education provides built-in reflection questions that address student social, emotional, and academic learning, the illustrated Feelings Monster that assists students develop emotional granularity, and automated data analysis in Insights. By helping students develop executive functioning skills and build confidence, Reflect empowers students to manage and reduce stress and better organize their life. For comparison, Google Forms does not feature built-in question sets for teachers, developmentally appropriate visuals like the Feelings Monster, or AI analysis that helps guide decisions at the classroom or school level.



¹ Source: How Does SEL Support Educational Equity and Excellence?



The Importance of Student Well-being

As the U.S. Surgeon General declared in an advisory on the mental health of young people, it is imperative that entire communities mobilize to “support and invest in the next generation.” Data suggests that from 2009 through 2019 feelings of hopelessness grew 40% and that the amount of young people considering suicide grew 36%. Concurrently, positive well-being factors like physical activity and social and emotional maturity continue to decrease. Studies of the effects of the past two years suggest that depressive and anxiety symptoms may have doubled in 2020.²

Recent family and educator polling suggests that both groups believe that schools need to prioritize well-being and SEL skills for students. According to a 2021 report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, over 90% of parents support schools addressing life skills such as goal setting, problem-solving, and self-confidence.⁴ Educators also resoundingly recognize their students’ SEL and well-being needs as represented in the 2021 edition of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s annual Educator Confidence Report. The survey included over 1,200 educators from across the U.S. who routinely placed well-being as a top priority.⁵

“We need to integrate social and emotional learning into the immune system of the entire district.”³

— Marc A. Brackett, Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

² Source: [Global Prevalence of Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms in Children and Adolescents During COVID-19](#)

³ Source: [Principals Need Social-Emotional Support, Too](#)

⁴ Source: [Parents and SEL](#)

⁵ Source: [7th Annual Educator Confidence Report](#)

Notable results from the Educator Confidence Report

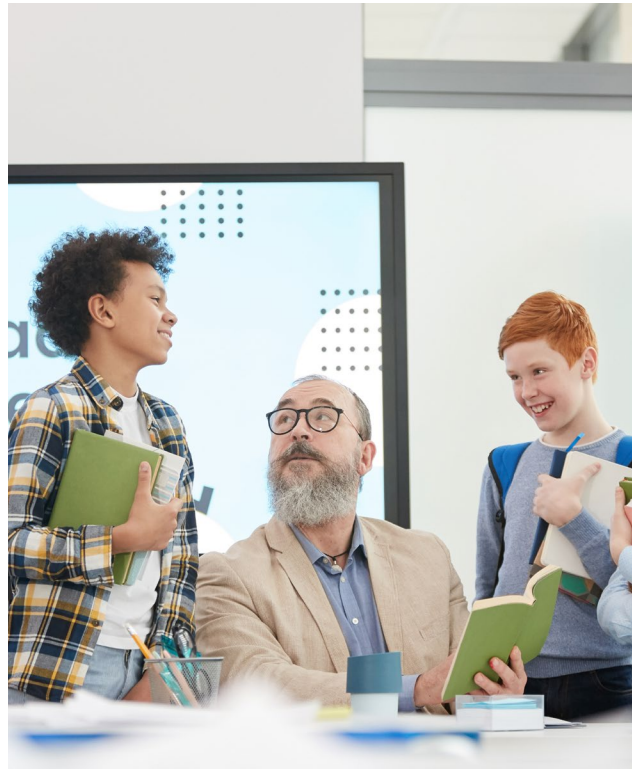
56% Educators identified resources to support well-being as their largest need.

72% Educators selected their students' well-being needs as their largest concern for their students.

82% Educators believe that an integrated, detailed well-being program would positively impact students.

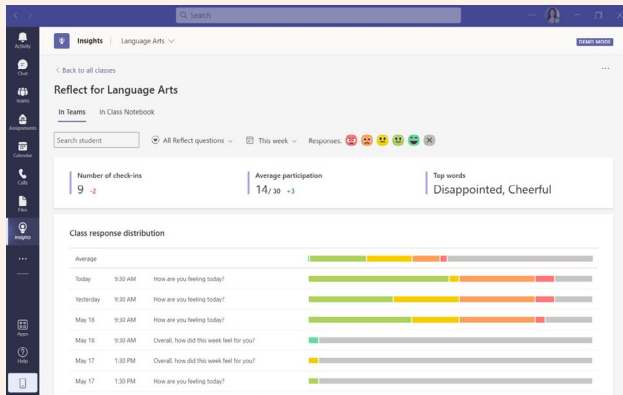
2nd Educators said that increased attention to students' well-being was the second most positive outcome of post-COVID education.

There are many established benefits to prioritizing SEL in schools including increases in student leadership skills, student voice, and greater agency and locus of control.⁶ Additionally, developing these well-being skills helps students feel safer, included in their community, and valued by their peers. Finally, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) conducted a meta-analysis that saw students who completed SEL programs experience an eleven percentile gain in core academic areas compared to students who were not in the program.⁷



⁶ Source: [When Social-Emotional Learning Is Misused](#)

⁷ Source: [What Does the Research Say?](#)



Well-being Matters

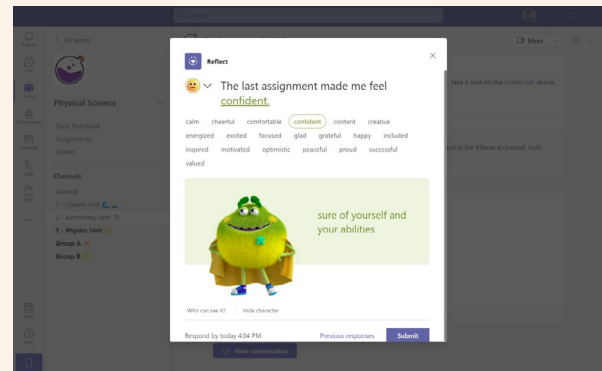
Microsoft Teams for Education* is a core product in the Microsoft 365 suite. The Teams for Education learning platform unites assessments, communication, and collaboration in a single digital hub, which includes a tool called Reflect that teachers can use to help meet their students' SEL needs. The emotional check-in app helps teachers support individual students and the class as a whole. Through the app, students build skills to recognize and navigate their emotions by providing regular opportunities to share and be heard. Reflect can help broaden a student's emotional vocabulary and deepen empathy for their peers while also providing valuable feedback to educators for a healthy classroom community. Additionally, teachers can view valuable student response data in Microsoft 365 Insights*.

By comparison, using the strategies published in Google for Education's 2021 Back to School Guide,⁸ educators are encouraged to use Google Workspace for Education* tools such as Forms* and Classroom* to conduct emotional check-ins with their students. The guide suggests having students regularly use Forms as an "emotional-health questionnaire" and then the educator reviews the responses in either Forms or Sheets*. Additionally, the guide recommends sending encouraging messages to students in Classroom or posting links to mindfulness videos from YouTube* to encourage brain breaks.

⁸ Source: [Back to School Guide 2021](#)

Notable differences in the experiences include:

- Reflect uses the Feelings Monster to help students visualize feelings and build emotional granularity. Google Forms does not have a similar feature that helps students visualize and express their feelings.



- Reflect allows students to view their responses over time, helping them to identify patterns and strategize for their emotional well-being.
- Microsoft 365 schools that use Education Insights Premium can also see student responses trends across classes, grade level, or school in their organizational view.
- Google Workspace for Education schools and administrators do not have access to review and monitor responses generated in Forms or Classroom responses.

Be Mindful of Staff Wellness

Educator well-being is known to impact student learning. According to a 2021 report from the RAND Corporation, educators are three times more likely to experience feelings of depression when compared to other adults.⁹ Well-being is also linked to educators leaving the profession,¹⁰ having fewer positive interactions with students, spending less time planning, and other habits that can negatively impact student learning.¹¹

School and district administrators can make intentional decisions that positively address staff well-being. Creating professional development plans that help staff meet student needs is a "foundational element"¹³ in implementing successful SEL programs and that addressing teacher mental health will "ultimately benefit everyone in the school."¹⁴

“ When you’re learning to be a teacher, you think it’s just about lesson plans, curriculum, and seating charts. I was blindsided by the emotional aspect of teaching—I didn’t know how to handle it. I was hurt by my students’ pain, and it was hard for me to leave that behind when I went home.¹²

— Alysia Ferguson Garcia

Supporting School Staff Well-being¹⁵

Microsoft Math Assistant in OneNote	Offer stipends for additional duties
Prioritize collaborative planning time	Listen to and act upon teacher feedback
Advocate for mental health through programs and mental health days	Provide well-rounded wellness support

⁹ Source: [Job-Related Stress Threatens the Teacher Supply](#)

¹⁰ Source: [The Mental Health Crisis Causing Teachers to Quit](#)

¹¹ Source: [Don't Forget the Adults: How Schools and Districts Can Support Educator Mental Health](#)

¹² Source: [When Students Are Traumatized, Teachers Are Too](#)

¹³ Source: [The Secret to Improving Students' Social-Emotional Skills? Start With the Adults](#)

¹⁴ Source: [Don't Forget the Adults: How Schools and Districts Can Support Educator Mental Health](#)

¹⁵ Source: [Wellness Can't Be Just Another Task for Teachers to Do](#)



Learning Scenario

The following scenario compares the step-by-step process that a representative eighth grade student would complete to respond to a SEL check-in. For comparison, we used Microsoft Reflect and Google Forms.

At a Glance

Topic

Self-Reflection and Understanding Our Emotions

Subject

Physical Sciences

Grade Level

8th grade

Step-by-step Comparison

Test Devices

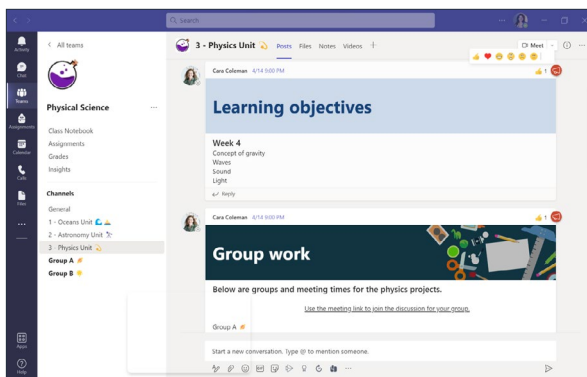
In conducting this comparison, the K-12 Blueprint team tested the following devices and configuration:

- **Microsoft Surface Go 2** running Windows 11 Pro 22000.493
- **ASUS Chromebook Flip C436** running 101.0.4951.59 (Official Build) (64-bit)

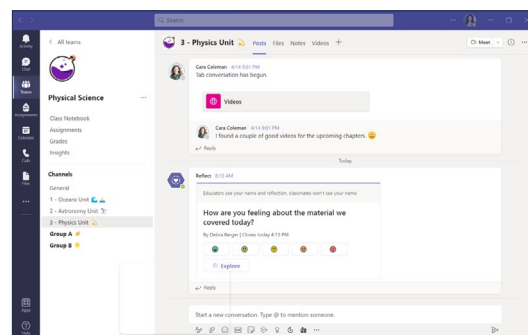
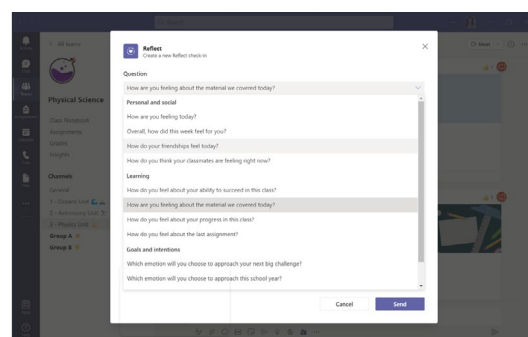
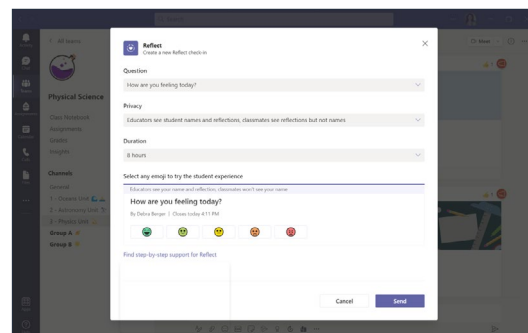
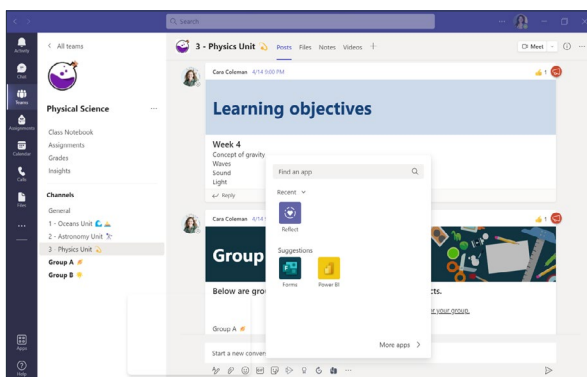
Microsoft Teams for Education Social Emotional Check-ins

Creating a Reflect Check-in

1. Open Teams for Education > Select the class Team > Select the Channel.
3. Select Question Prompt and Privacy Level > Send Reflect check-in to the Channel.

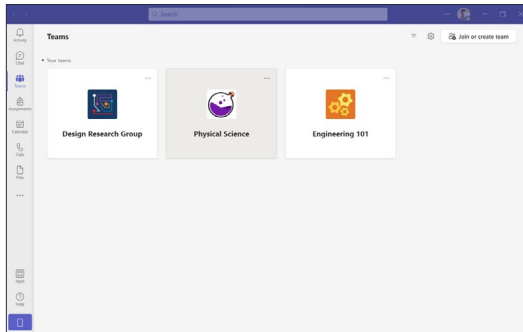


2. Click on three-dot menu > Select Reflect.

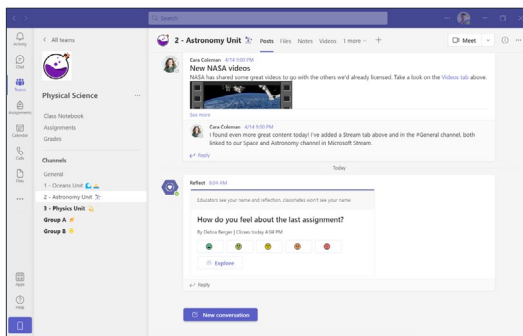


Students Submitting Responses

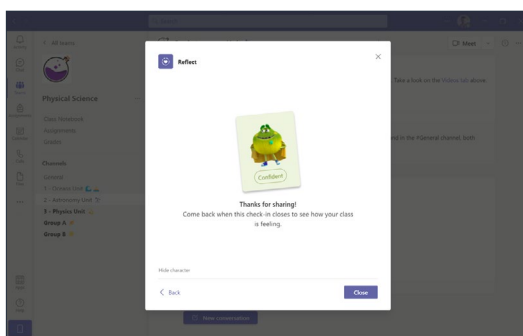
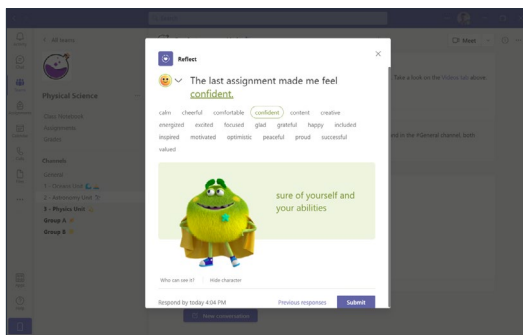
1. Open Microsoft Teams for Education > Select Class Team.



2. Select Channel > Respond to Reflect check-in.

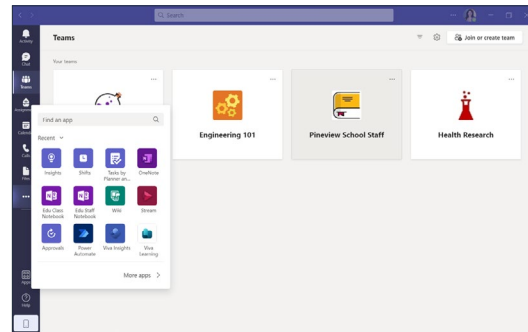


3. Use the Feelings Monster to develop emotional granularity.

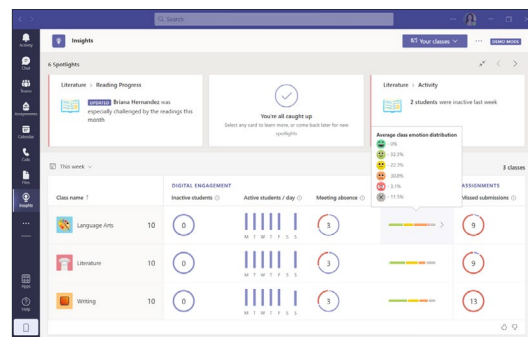
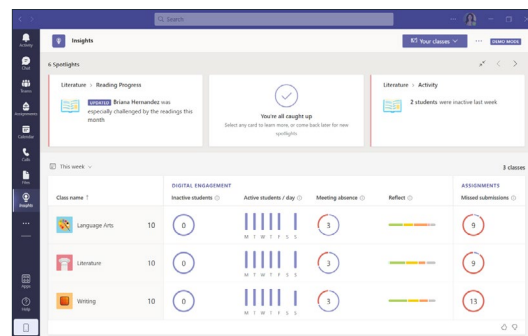


Reviewing Responses in Insights

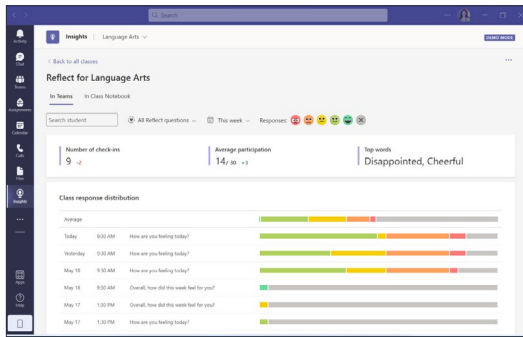
1. Click the three-dot menu on left-hand side of Teams for Education > Select Insights.



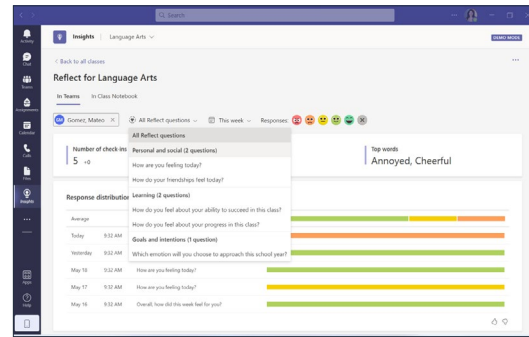
2. Find Reflect in data dashboard for quick snapshot.



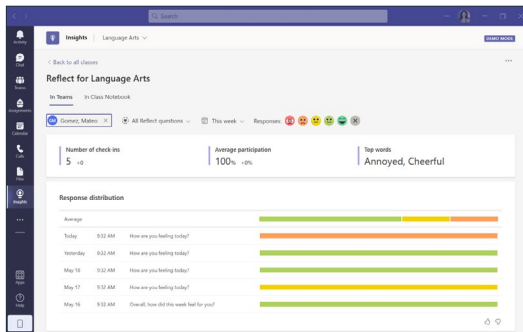
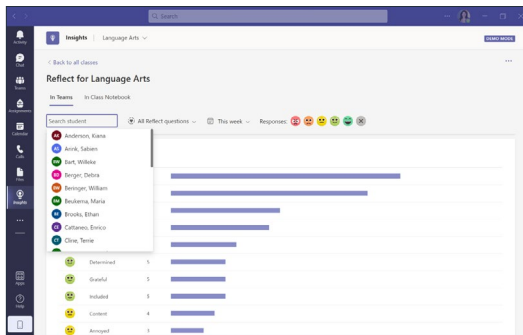
3. View trends in class responses.



5. Filter by question.



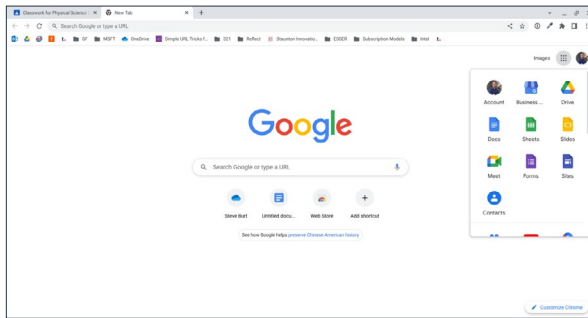
4. Filter responses by student name.



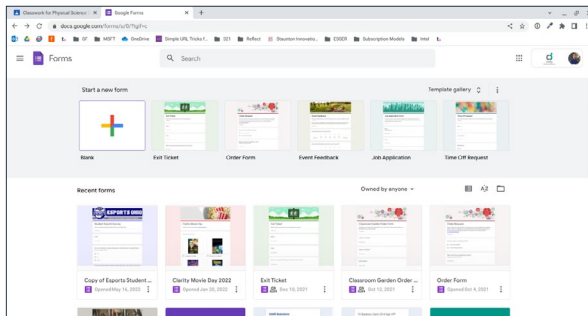
Google Workspace for Education Social Emotional Check-ins

Creating a Google Forms Check-in

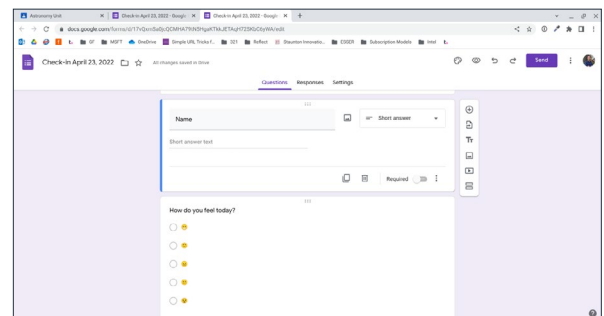
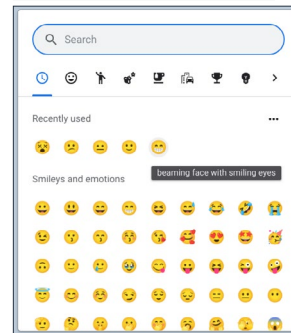
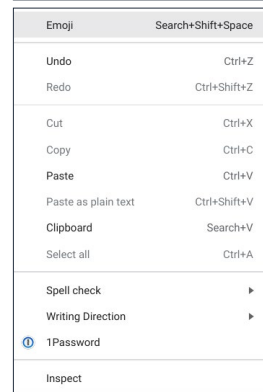
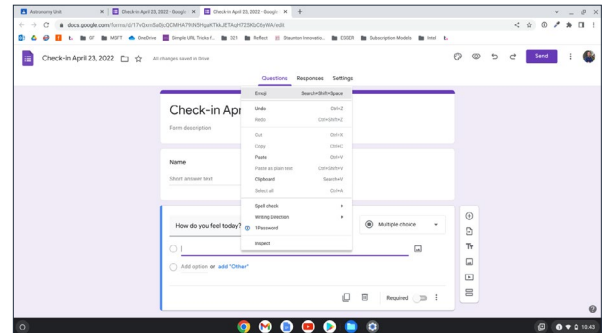
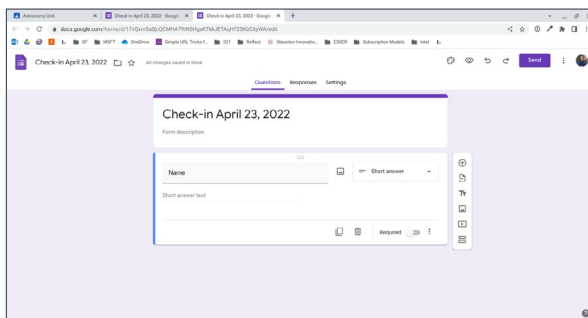
1. Click App Launcher in Google Chrome* > Select Forms.
2. Open a blank Form.
3. Add questions.
4. Add emoji options by right-clicking and selecting images.



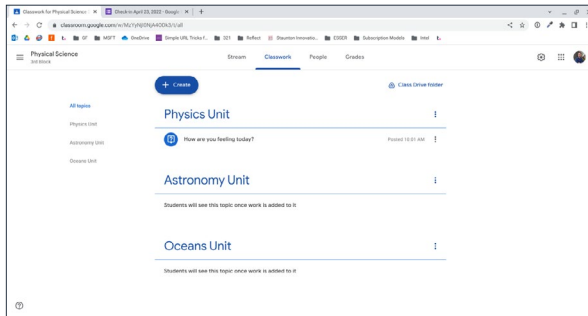
2. Open a blank Form.



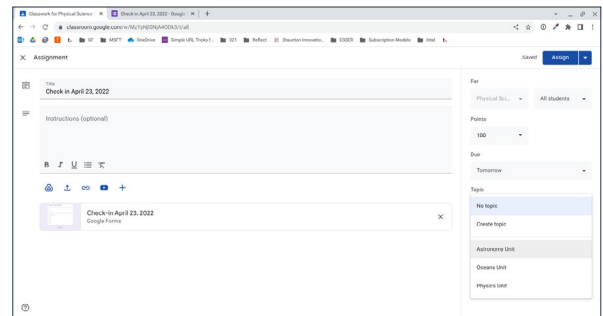
3. Add questions.



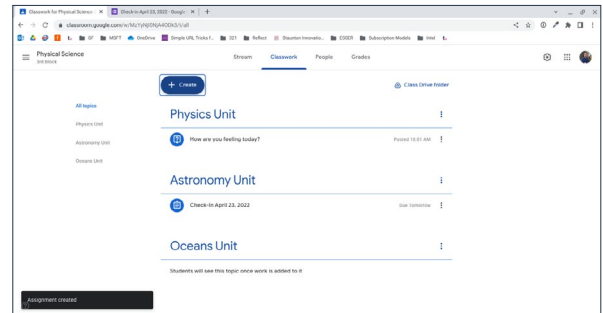
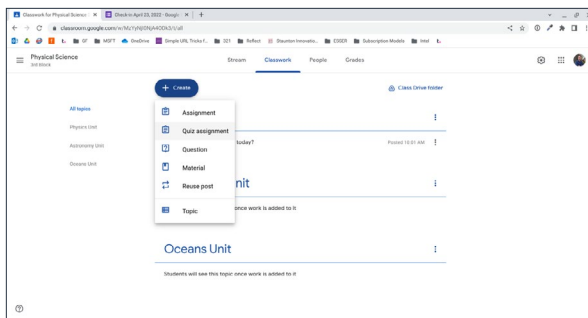
5. Open Google Classroom > Select Classwork tab.



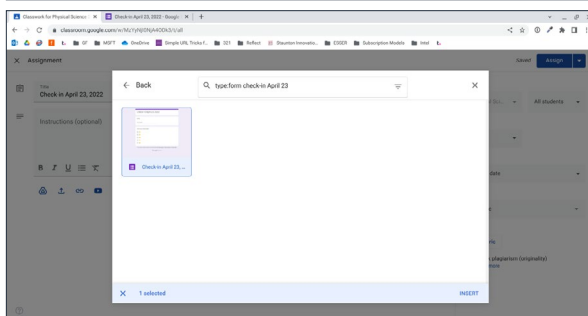
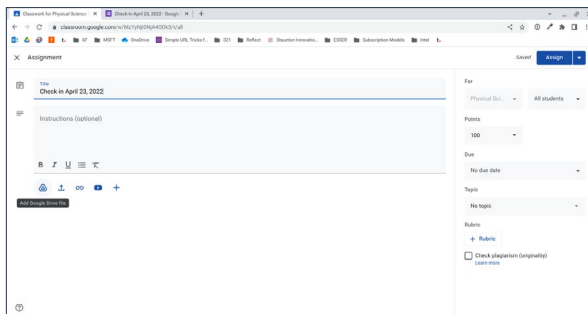
8. Adjust Assignment settings > Select Assign.



6. Click Create > Select Assignment.

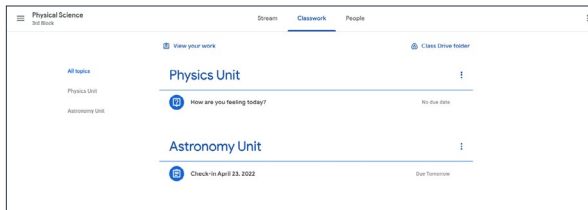
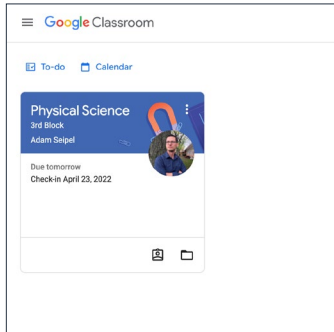


7. Click Google Drive* icon > attach Google Form Check-in.

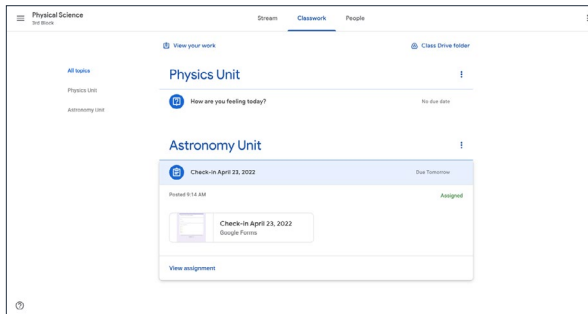


Filling out a Google Form Check-in

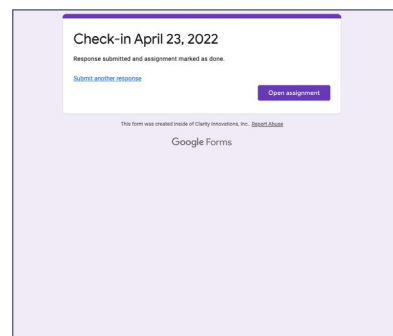
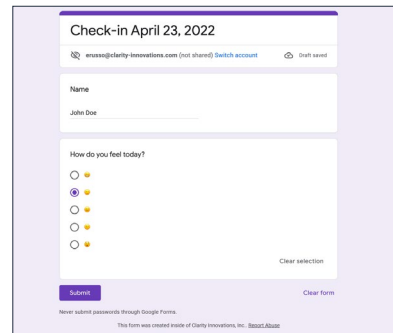
1. Open Google Classroom > Select Physical Science course.



2. Open Check-in April 23, 2022.

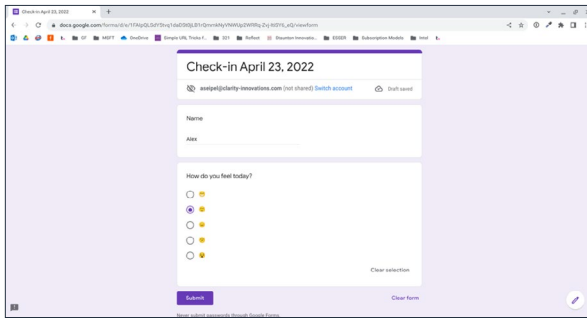


3. Fill out form > Submit.

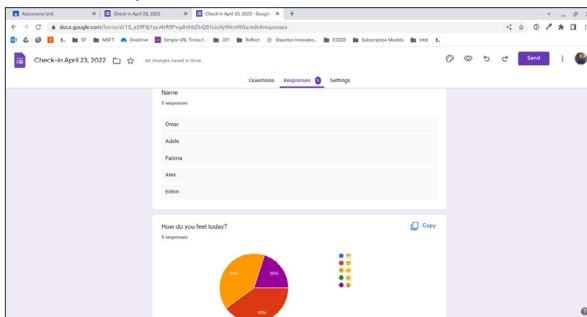


Viewing submissions in a Google Form Check-in

1. Open the Check-in April 23, 2022 Form.



2. Click on Response tab.



Conclusion

Microsoft demonstrates its commitment to meeting students’ well-being needs by providing Reflect, a tool that enables students to build important social and emotional skills. Available for all Microsoft 365 education users, Reflect is embedded into Microsoft Teams for Education, creating a single platform to address students’ academic, social, and emotional learning needs. Educators and schools can use the powerful Insights app to further explore individual, class, and school trends that can help inform interventions and additional SEL opportunities.

By comparison, Google Workspace’s for Education’s solution relies upon two separate tools, Forms and Classroom. Neither Forms nor Classroom is intentionally designed to support SEL needs nor do the tools provide educators and administrators vital data that can help address potential harmful trends.

Tool	Single Platform	Pre-built Emotional and Academic Reflection Questions	Illustrated Emotions	AI-driven Data Analysis Engine
Reflect in Microsoft Teams for Education	Yes	Yes	Over 50	Insights ¹⁶
Google Forms & Classroom	No	No	None	0

As schools continue to develop and extend their SEL offerings, educators will rely on their most commonly used tools, such as Teams for Education and Classroom, to provide a streamlined and integrated digital resource that supports students’ academic, social, and emotional learning needs. Providing built-in support resources that fully integrate within the Teams for Education platform, Microsoft’s Reflect offers a more comprehensive experience that helps students grow and provides schools with data that can help better identify and address needs at scale. For students and educators alike, the Microsoft education solution, Reflect, provides better results, saves teachers time, and provides actionable student SEL data that can inform classroom, school, and district decisions.

¹⁶Source: [View Reflect data in Insights](#)