

# THE CHECK-IN ROUTINE

GROWING AUTHENTIC SKILLS  
THROUGH AGILE LEARNING



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# Introduction

In an Agile Classroom, routines are structured, repeated practices that help students develop key skills like self-direction, collaboration, and adaptability. Rather than focusing solely on content knowledge, these routines emphasize hands-on skill-building through consistent practice. This approach enables students to not only learn these skills but also to internalize and apply them in real-world contexts.

Agile Classrooms use Learning Sprints—an iterative learning cycle timeboxed to four weeks or less—to plan, achieve, and review learning goals. Each Learning Sprint serves as a feedback loop, chunking larger projects and the overall learning journey into smaller, manageable cycles. By working incrementally, students make steady progress while continuously building and learning.

Each Learning Sprint contains Five Self-Directed Learning Routines, which can be used together in a sequence or independently, depending on the learning context:

Routine	Description	Focus	Timing
<b>1. Refinement</b>	Revisiting and updating learning goals to keep them relevant and challenging	Future goals	Continuously, as needed
<b>2. Planning</b>	Defining selected goals and preparing steps to achieve them	Current goals and the action plan	Start of Learning Sprint
<b>3. Check-In</b>	Tracking progress and making real-time adjustments	Monitoring and adapting daily progress	Often each class period. Happens multiple times throughout the Learning Sprint.
<b>4. Review</b>	Presenting learning outcomes, receiving feedback, and updating goals	Learning outcomes and progress	End of Learning Sprint
<b>5. Retrospective</b>	Reflecting on learning methods and teamwork	Process & relationships	End of Learning Sprint, After Review

This guide focuses on the Check-In Routine. In this routine, students take ownership of their learning by regularly reviewing and adapting their progress.



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# Understanding the Check-In Routine

The Check-In Routine is a 5–10 minute process where students review their progress, adjust plans, and request support to stay aligned with their goals. It occurs frequently during the Learning Sprint, typically once per class period, allowing students to take quick corrective actions as needed. This routine provides regular touchpoints for students to assess their progress and ensure they remain on track toward their goals.

The Check-In Routine happens after Sprint Planning and before the Sprint Review. It repeats multiple times throughout the Learning Sprint, offering consistent opportunities for reflection and adjustment. During each Check-In, students use the Learning Canvas to visualize their tasks, track progress, and stay focused on their Sprint goals.

Any of the Five Self-Directed Learning Routines, including the Check-In, can be used independently as a standalone routine or as part of the broader Learning Sprint framework. While the Check-In is designed to work alongside other routines like Backlog Refinement, Planning, and Review, educators can implement it independently, adapting to the specific needs of their classroom.

## Key Objectives of the Check-In Routine:

1. **Monitor Progress:** Students review what they have accomplished since the last Check-In, reflecting on their current tasks and progress toward their Sprint goals.
2. **Adapt Plans:** Based on progress and any encountered roadblocks, students adjust their plans to stay aligned with their goals while maintaining flexibility.
3. **Seek Feedback and Support:** Students identify tasks that require feedback or review and actively request assistance. This creates a collaborative learning environment and ensures challenges are addressed promptly.
4. **Remove Roadblocks:** Students and teachers work together to identify and remove obstacles hindering progress, ensuring tasks can continue without unnecessary delays.
5. **Ensure Accountability:** Students take ownership of their learning by regularly updating the Learning Canvas and reporting on their work, fostering accountability to themselves and their peers.

During the Check-In, students respond to four key questions that guide their reflection and next steps:

1. What has been done since the last Check-In?
2. What will be done by the next check-in?
3. What tasks need feedback or review?
4. Are there any roadblocks?

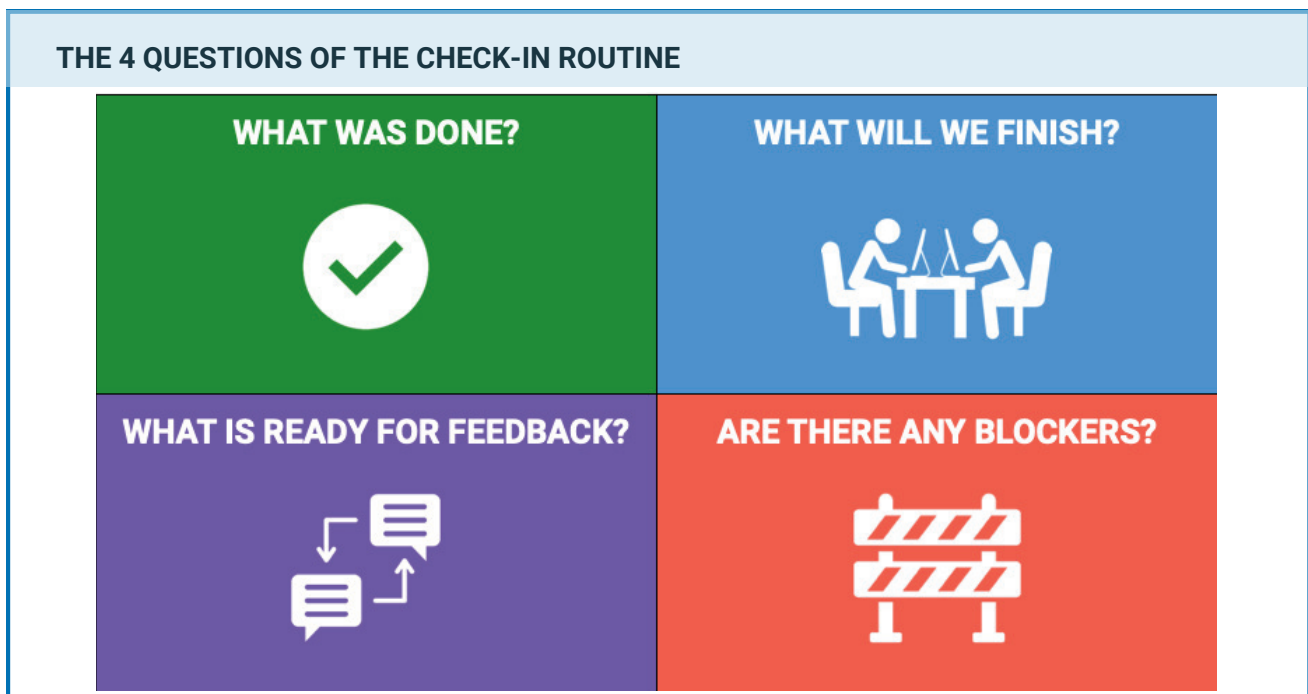


Figure 2.1: The Four Check-In Questions

These questions can be adapted to suit the needs of the class, as long as the Check-In maintains its purpose.

### Optional SEL Question:

In addition to the standard Check-In questions, Teachers may choose to include an additional Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) question during the Check-In, such as:

- ◆ *What is something you're looking forward to outside of school this week?*
- ◆ *What color best describes your mood today?*
- ◆ *Who is someone who made you smile recently, and what did they do?*

SEL questions promote emotional awareness and connection, fostering a supportive classroom environment.

To assist in answering these questions and to provide a visual representation of progress, students use the **Learning Canvas**. The Learning Canvas is a visible learning artifact that helps students organize and track their tasks for the current Learning Sprint. It breaks down goals into actionable steps, making progress clear and actionable for both students and teachers.

THE BIGGER PICTURE		BLOCKED/ HELP	
Goals	Tasks	Doing	Done

Students/Team Name

**LEARNING CANVAS**

AGILE CLASSROOMS

**Figure 2.2:** Learning Canvas Template: The Learning Canvas helps students visualize and organize their tasks for the current Learning Sprint, making progress visible and engaging for learners. There are various formats of the Learning Canvas available for download at <https://learn.agileclassrooms.com/agile-learning-canvas>, or you can customize your own. For consistency, this guide will use the format shown above in all examples.



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# Preparation

The Check-In Routine relies on the Learning Canvas as the primary artifact for making the learning process and progress visible. In Agile Classrooms, this Visible Learning Artifact plays a central role in the Check-In, enabling both students and teachers to track completed tasks, monitor ongoing work, and identify any roadblocks that need attention.

**Updating the Learning Canvas:** Ensure the Learning Canvas is fully prepared, visible, and available for the Check-In. As the primary tool for the Check-In, the Learning Canvas provides a clear visual structure to help students adapt their tasks, track their progress, and request feedback or support.

**Schedule Time:** Timebox the Check-In to 5–10 minutes and establish a consistent routine, either during or outside class.

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## Procedure

Below is the suggested procedure for facilitating Check-In Routines. This process can be adapted based on classroom dynamics and specific needs, as long as the Check-In achieves its purpose.

### 1. REVIEW THE LEARNING CANVAS

- ◆ Students begin by reviewing the Learning Canvas to assess their current progress.

### 2. ASK AND ANSWER THE STANDARD CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

As each question is asked and answered, update the Learning Canvas accordingly.

#### a What has been done since the last Check-In?

- ◆ *Students identify tasks that have been completed.*
- ◆ *Move completed tasks from the **Doing** column to the **Done** column on the Learning Canvas to signify progress.*

**QUESTION 1 What was done?**

**THE CHECK-IN**

Participants discuss what was done.

The Learning Canvas is updated to reflect current progress.

In this example, Task A for Goal 1 is moved to 'Done' on the Learning Canvas.

	Goals	Tasks	Doing	Done
Goal 1		D	B C	A
Goal 2		B C D	A	
Goal 3		E F		
		A B C		

Students/Team Name

LEARNING CANVAS

Learning Canvas  
Makes the learning plan and progress visible

**Figure 4.1:** Learning Canvas Question 1: The Learning Canvas is visually updated by moving any items that are completed to the Done column.

**b** What do we intend to finish by the next Check-In?

- ◆ Students discuss and select tasks they plan to work on next.
- ◆ Move these tasks from the **To Do** column to the **Doing** column on the Learning Canvas to indicate they are in progress.

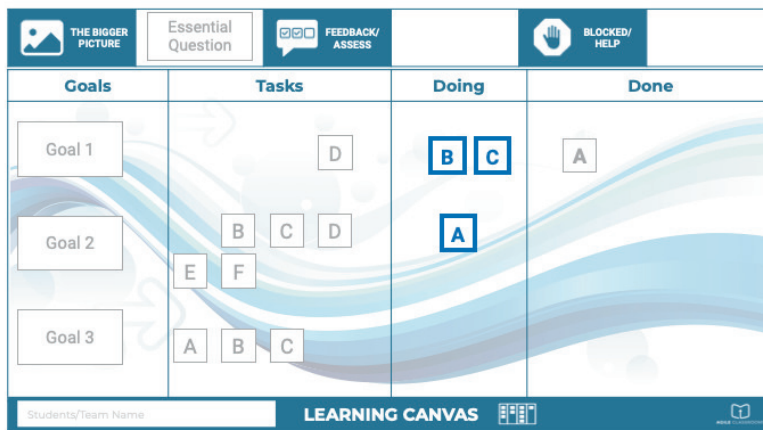
**QUESTION 2** What will intend to get done by next Check-In?

**THE CHECK-IN**

Participants discuss which tasks will be worked on until the next Check-in.

Those tasks are moved to 'Doing' on the Learning Canvas.

In this example, task 1B, 1C, and 2A will be attempted to be completed by the next Check-in.



Makes the learning plan and progress visible

**Figure 4.2:** Learning Canvas Question 2: The Learning Canvas is visually updated by moving any items that will be started from the To Do column to the Doing column.

**c** Is there anything needing feedback or review?

- ◆ Students identify tasks that require feedback or peer review.
- ◆ Move these tasks to the **Feedback** section of the Learning Canvas.
- ◆ Identify who will provide the necessary feedback.

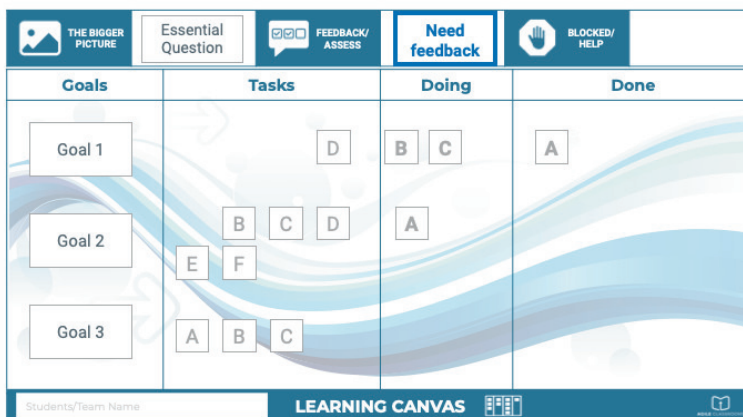
**QUESTION 3** What is ready for feedback or assessment?

**THE CHECK-IN**

Participants discuss if there is anything ready for feedback or to be assessed. Participants may decide who will provide the feedback.

Items needing feedback or assessment are placed in the 'Feedback' section of the Learning Canvas. This serves as signal to others and signifies it is a priority.

The feedback itself is not given during the Check-in.



Makes the learning plan and progress visible

**Figure 4.3:** Learning Canvas Question 3: The Learning Canvas is visually updated by placing any items needing feedback or assessment into the Feedback section of the Learning Canvas.

#### d Are there any roadblocks?

- ◆ Students discuss any challenges or impediments hindering their progress.
- ◆ Visualize roadblocks by moving affected tasks to the **Roadblocks** section on the Learning Canvas or marking them with a visual indicator (e.g., a red sticky note).
- ◆ Determine who will help to resolve the roadblocks.

#### QUESTION 4 Are there any roadblocks?

**CHECK-IN ROUTINE**

Participants discuss if there is anything they need help on. Blockers are made visible by adding the item to the Blocked/Helped box of the Learning Canvas.

For example, a student is stuck getting Task 1B. The student would share this and move Task 1B to the Help section on the Learning Canvas.

Students/Team Name

LEARNING CANVAS

Makes the learning plan and progress visible

**Figure 4.4:** Learning Canvas Question 4: The Learning Canvas is visually updated by moving any tasks that are blocked or facing obstacles to the Blocked/Help section, signaling the need for support or resolution.

### 3. UPDATE THE LEARNING CANVAS & CLOSE THE CHECK-IN

- ◆ Ensure the Learning Canvas reflects all discussions and task statuses
- ◆ Confirm that all students are aligned on the next steps and priorities
- ◆ Flagged roadblocks or tasks needing feedback should have assigned actions or support.
- ◆ Ensure the Check-In is concise, lasting no longer than 5–10 minutes.

#### Flexibility in Structure

While the above procedure is the recommended approach, the structure of the Check-In can be adapted based on the teacher's style and classroom needs, as long as the aim of the Check-In is met.



## 05

# Scaffolding Progression

Scaffolding helps teachers create a structured environment where students gradually take on more responsibility while still receiving support. In Agile Classrooms, building student agility involves two key dimensions: Choice and Collaboration, supported by the Spectrum of Choice and the Spectrum of Collaboration, which guide students to become more effective at making decisions and working as a team.

The intersection of these spectrums forms **the Four Learning Zones**, providing a clear framework for how Choice and Collaboration come together. These zones simplify the configuration of the learning environment based on students' current abilities, providing the right level of challenge to foster growth without causing overwhelm.

Next, we will explore each framework in detail, focusing on how they enhance reflection, collaboration, and meaningful improvement during the Check-In Routine.

## 5.1 THE SPECTRUM OF CHOICE

The **Spectrum of Choice** describes how students' autonomy evolves in the Check-In Routine. As they progress through the levels, students go from observing to fully leading the routine, making their own decisions about how to answer the four Check-In questions and update the Learning Canvas. The role of the educator shifts alongside this process, transitioning from an **Instructor** to a **Mentor**, and, ultimately, a **Coach**. While students gain more autonomy, the teacher is always there to provide guidance and feedback, ensuring students stay on track and have the support they need to succeed.

This gradual release of responsibility helps build students' confidence in making decisions and taking responsibility for their learning.

Choice Level	How It Looks in the Check-In	Language Examples
<b>1: TEACHER-LED</b>  <b>Student Choice:</b> Low  <b>Educator:</b> <b>Instructor</b> <b>Student:</b> <b>Follower</b>	The teacher directs the Check-In Routine, modeling each step and answering the four Check-In questions on behalf of the class. Students observe and follow along, learning how to answer the questions and update the Learning Canvas.	"Watch how I answer the Check-In questions."  "Follow my lead while I update the Learning Canvas for today."
<b>2: CO-LED</b>  <b>Student choice:</b> Medium  <b>Educator:</b> <b>Mentor</b> <b>Student:</b> <b>Contributor</b>	The teacher acts as a mentor, making decisions jointly with students while maintaining some authority. Students actively participate by answering the Check-In questions, providing input, and co-updating the Learning Canvas, with guidance and corrections from the teacher.	"Let's think about the next steps together."  "Do you agree this task belongs in the 'Done' column?"
<b>3: STUDENT-LED</b>  <b>Student Choice:</b> High  <b>Educator:</b> <b>Coach</b> <b>Student:</b> <b>Leader</b>	Students lead the Check-In Routine, answering the four Check-In questions and managing the updates to the Learning Canvas independently. The teacher, as a Coach, offers feedback and guidance when requested, stepping in only when necessary to facilitate reflection or growth.	"What do you think is blocking your progress?"  "How might you adjust your approach for the next Check-In?"

While students gain more autonomy as they progress through the levels, the educator always maintains the authority to overrule or veto decisions. However, this authority should be used sparingly, especially as students move from Level 2 (Co-Led) to Level 3 (Student-Led). Overruling too frequently can undermine student agency and ownership. It's meant to be a "break-in-case-of-emergency" measure, only used when absolutely necessary to prevent major setbacks or ensure safety.

## 5.2 THE SPECTRUM OF COLLABORATION AND GROUP DYNAMICS

The Spectrum of Collaboration outlines how students interact with one another during the Check-In Routine. As they progress from individual work to group-based and team-based collaboration, they develop essential interpersonal and teamwork skills. These skills are critical for 21st-century learning, fostering a shared responsibility for success.

Collaboration Level	Student Interaction	Learning Canvas Usage	Group Facilitator
<b>1. Individual (Solo)</b>  <b>Collaboration: Low</b>	Students work independently, completing their Check-In without collaboration. Each student is responsible for their own progress and updates. Peers may offer support and feedback as needed.	The teacher or student performs individual Check-Ins and updates the Learning Canvas, with feedback focusing solely on personal progress.	No facilitator required.
<b>2. Group (Cooperative)</b>  <b>Collaboration: Medium</b>	Students work in small groups, providing peer feedback but retaining ownership of individual tasks.	Students contribute individually but provide peer feedback and update the Learning Canvas together under guidance from the teacher or a student facilitator.	Teacher may facilitate, but, recommended to also have a student facilitator.
<b>3. Team (Collaborative)</b>  <b>Collaboration: High</b>	Students collaborate as a team, sharing responsibility for tasks and updates. Feedback is given and received as a group.	The team collectively manages the Check-In, answering the four questions and updating the Learning Canvas. Peer feedback is essential, and responsibility is shared.	A student facilitator guides the team's Check-In.

## 5.3 THE FOUR LEARNING ZONES

Through the intersection of the **Spectrum of Choice** and the **Spectrum of Collaboration**, student agility emerges. The **Four Learning Zones** provide a structured path that students follow as they move toward greater self-direction and collaboration. Each zone represents a combination of levels from both spectrums and helps to scaffold student progress in a more tailored, flexible way.

	Collaboration Low - Medium	Collaboration Medium - High
Choice Medium - High	<p><b>ZONE 3: INDEPENDENT LEARNERS</b></p> <p><b>Choice:</b> Students independently manage their Check-In.</p> <p><b>Collaboration:</b> Students work individually with minimal peer interaction.</p> <p><b>Learning Canvas:</b> Students update their personalized Learning Canvas.</p>	<p><b>ZONE 4: SELF-DIRECTED TEAMS</b></p> <p><b>Choice:</b> Teams manage the Check-In Routine.</p> <p><b>Collaboration:</b> Teams collaborate fully as long-lived teams, making decisions and addressing roadblocks.</p> <p><b>Learning Canvas:</b> Teams update a shared Learning Canvas.</p>
Choice Medium - High	<p><b>ZONE 1: TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM</b></p> <p><b>Choice:</b> Teacher directs the Check-In, asking questions and managing updates.</p> <p><b>Collaboration:</b> Students work individually with minimal peer interaction.</p> <p><b>Learning Canvas:</b> Teacher updates a classroom-wide Learning Canvas.</p>	<p><b>ZONE 2: COOPERATIVE LEARNING</b></p> <p><b>Choice:</b> Teacher guides the Check-In, but students contribute.</p> <p><b>Collaboration:</b> Students collaborate in small groups.</p> <p><b>Learning Canvas:</b> Groups update a shared Learning Canvas with teacher oversight.</p>

The intent of an Agile Classroom is to incrementally scaffold students' autonomy and collaboration capacity so they take increasing responsibility for the Check-In Routine, requiring minimal teacher intervention.

# Evaluating Student Progress

Evaluating student competency during any of the Five Self-Directed Learning Routines are crucial for understanding their growth in self-direction, collaboration, and adaptability. Regular coaching with targeted feedback enables students to incrementally take on more responsibility for their learning.

To facilitate this process, Agile Classrooms provides two rubrics for the Check-In: a single-point rubric for quick, targeted feedback and a multi-point rubric for a more comprehensive evaluation of student progression.

## 6.1 SINGLE-POINT RUBRIC FOR THE CHECK-IN ROUTINE

Competency	Success Criteria	Learning Canvas Observation
<b>Monitor and articulate the progress of work</b>	Students clearly explain what tasks they've completed, what is in progress, and what remains. They consistently move tasks between the columns.	Tasks are correctly placed, and movement on the Learning Canvas aligns with the students' verbal updates and Sprint Goals.
<b>Identify impediments</b>	Students identify roadblocks or challenges preventing progress and visually flag these in the Roadblocks section.	Roadblocks are clearly marked and tied to the challenges students share during Check-Ins, aligning with Sprint Goals.
<b>Articulate need for feedback and support</b>	Students proactively request feedback or help and move tasks requiring support to the Feedback section.	Tasks in the Feedback section reflect the support requests discussed in Check-Ins and progress after feedback.
<b>Accountable to self and others</b>	Students take responsibility by attending Check-Ins, following through on tasks, and accurately reporting their progress.	Regular updates on the Learning Canvas align with their reports during Check-Ins and reflect accountability toward sprint goals.
<b>Provide support to others</b>	Students offer feedback and help peers with tasks in the Feedback or Roadblocks sections.	Support is seen through tasks added specifically to help peers or students signing up to take on tasks flagged as roadblocks or requiring feedback.
<b>Adapt the learning plan when needed</b>	Students adapt tasks or plans to better achieve their learning goals based on feedback or challenges.	Updates in the To Do or Roadblocks sections reflect changes made to achieve sprint goals.

## 6.2 MULTI-POINT RUBRIC FOR THE CHECK-IN ROUTINE

COMPETENCY	NOVICE	ADVANCED BEGINNER	COMPETENT	PROFICIENT	EXPERT
<b>Articulate the progress of work</b>	Relies on the teacher to describe progress and update the Learning Canvas.	Relies on the teacher to prompt them to describe progress, but students update the Learning Canvas on their own when prompted.	Describes progress with some support and updates the Learning Canvas independently but inconsistently.	Regularly describes progress and updates the Learning Canvas accurately without prompting from teacher.	Updates the Learning Canvas and progress in real-time, as soon as tasks are completed, without waiting for Check-Ins.
<b>Identify impediments</b>	Relies on the teacher to identify roadblocks and update the Roadblocks section of the Learning Canvas.	Relies on the teacher prompts to identify roadblocks, but students update the Roadblocks section themselves.	Identifies most roadblocks independently and updates the Roadblocks section with occasional reminders.	Consistently identifies roadblocks but tends to wait for Check-Ins to communicate them; flags issues on the Roadblocks section during Check-Ins.	Flags roadblocks immediately as they arise and updates the Roadblocks section, not waiting for Check-Ins.
<b>Articulate need for feedback and support</b>	Relies on the teacher to request feedback and support on their behalf.	Relies on the teacher to prompt them to ask for feedback or help, but students update the Feedback section themselves when prompted.	Requests feedback and help independently but needs reminders at times.	Regularly asks for feedback and help during the Check-In. Updates the Feedback section without prompting.	Seeks feedback and support and updates the Learning Canvas as soon as it's needed, not waiting for the Check-In to do so.
<b>Provide support to others</b>	Rarely offers help to peers, even when prompted.	Occasionally offers support but requires reminders from the teacher to engage with peer tasks.	Offers support when asked but is inconsistent in following through on peer support tasks.	Regularly offers support when requested by peers during the Check-In.	Supports peers without waiting for the Check-In, responding to requests for Feedback or Roadblocks.
<b>Adjust the learning plan when needed</b>	Relies on the teacher to make adjustments and update the Learning Canvas when issues arise.	Occasionally adjusts plans when prompted by the teacher and updates the Learning Canvas on their own when reminded.	Adjusts plans based on feedback with some guidance but doesn't consistently update the Learning Canvas.	Regularly adjusts plans based on feedback and roadblocks, updating the Learning Canvas independently.	Adapts plans as soon as new feedback or roadblocks arise, ensuring the Learning Canvas reflects changes immediately.

## 6.3 STUDENT-FRIENDLY RUBRIC FOR THE CHECK-IN ROUTINE

This student-friendly rubric is designed for educators to use with their students. It helps students self-assess their performance during the Check-In Routine, encouraging them to reflect on their progress and take ownership of their learning. Educators can guide students in using this rubric to identify areas where they are excelling and where they may need to improve.

What You're Doing	Just Starting	Getting Better	Doing Well	Nailing It	Crushing It
<b>Explaining Progress</b>	Needs the teacher to explain progress and move tasks on the Learning Canvas.	Needs reminders to explain progress, but moves tasks when asked.	Explains progress mostly on their own, moves tasks but needs reminders.	Regularly explains progress and moves tasks without reminders.	Updates tasks in real-time, no need to wait for Check-Ins.
<b>Identifying Problems</b>	Needs teacher to point out problems and update the Roadblocks section.	Needs reminders to identify problems, but updates Roadblocks when asked.	Spots most problems on their own, updates Roadblocks with occasional reminders.	Consistently spots problems, updates Roadblocks during Check-Ins.	Flags problems right away, updates Roadblocks immediately.
<b>Asking for Feedback</b>	Needs teacher to ask for feedback or help.	Needs reminders to ask for feedback, but updates Feedback section when asked.	Asks for feedback on their own, but sometimes needs reminders.	Regularly asks for feedback and updates Feedback section without being asked.	Requests feedback as soon as it's needed and updates the section right away.
<b>Helping Others</b>	Rarely helps peers, even when reminded.	Sometimes helps, but needs reminders to get involved.	Helps when asked but sometimes needs reminders to follow through.	Regularly helps peers when they ask during Check-Ins.	Helps peers without waiting, responds to Feedback or Roadblocks requests immediately.
<b>Adjusting Your Plan</b>	Needs the teacher to adjust plans and update the Learning Canvas when there's a problem.	Adjusts plans when reminded, updates canvas when asked.	Adjusts plans based on feedback, but doesn't always update the Learning Canvas.	Regularly adjusts plans and updates the Learning Canvas on their own.	Adapts plans as soon as new feedback or problems arise, updates the Learning Canvas

## 6.4 COACHING STUDENT AGILITY

As students develop their abilities to Check-In effectively, there is often a need for additional guidance and feedback. To help classrooms grow their competency in self-direction and collaboration, the Coaching and Feedback Form provides structured support. This tool allows educators to guide students through key aspects of the Check-In, helping them monitor their progress, address roadblocks, and improve their collaboration with peers. The example below is used by the teacher to coach her students in the Check-In Routine, but you can release control for students to do this on their own where desired.

### Example Scenario: Renewable Energy Innovators (9th Grade Science Class)

Student/Team	Team Innovators	Learning Sprint Routine	Check-In
Competency To Improve		Current Level	Next Target Level
Articulate progress of work		Advanced Beginner	Competent
<b>Causes:</b> What are the factors influencing the current level of performance?		<b>Growth Goal:</b> What is the desired future state of performance? What does better look like?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Struggles with breaking down tasks into smaller, manageable parts, making it difficult to keep tasks moving on the Learning Canvas.</li> <li>Reluctant to share progress, fearing negative judgment.</li> </ul>		Articulate and visualize the progress of tasks during Check-Ins by identifying and moving tasks between columns on the Learning Canvas with minimal prompting by me.	

Growth Experiment	Next Improvements To Try	Progress Notes
<b>Experiment 1</b> Date:	Post the four Check-In questions visibly in the classroom. Facilitate a round-robin Check-In where students move their tasks on the Learning Canvas as they respond.	Students began moving tasks independently, but some still required teacher validation.
<b>Experiment 2</b> Date:	Color-code sticky notes based on task ownership. Assign a student facilitator to guide the Check-In. Each student moves tasks as they answer the questions.	Increased participation, but some students hesitated to update the Learning Canvas and share their progress with their peers.
<b>Experiment 3</b> Date:	Celebrate when students move items on the Learning Canvas and discuss their progress. Try a clapper device or bell to celebrate when any item moves to done.	Students became more proactive and engaged in updating their progress during the Check-In.
<b>Experiment 4</b> Date:	<b>They are now at the Competent level of proficiency. Yay!</b>	

Download the full Student Growth and Feedback Form and instructions as part of the Agile Classrooms at [learn.agileclassrooms.com/CoachingStudentAgility](https://learn.agileclassrooms.com/CoachingStudentAgility).

# Potential Pitfalls and How to Mitigate Them

Be mindful of common challenges and strategies to overcome them.

Pitfall	Description	Ways to Mitigate It
<b>Over-Explaining</b>	Students may provide too much detail, causing the Check-In to take longer than intended.	Focus on the four core questions and timebox the Check-In to 5–10 minutes.
<b>Tasks Too Large</b>	Students struggle to make progress between Check-Ins because tasks are too big to complete in the time available.	Ensure tasks are broken down into smaller pieces that can be completed by the next Check-In or class period.
<b>Ignoring Roadblocks</b>	Students may not feel comfortable identifying challenges or may ignore problems, leading to delays in addressing them.	Encourage a supportive classroom culture where finding and addressing roadblocks is celebrated. Visually identify roadblocks on the Learning Canvas.
<b>Problem Solving During Check-In</b>	Check-Ins may get sidetracked by trying to solve problems rather than simply identifying them and who will help.	Remind students that the Check-In is focused on identifying problems, not solving them.
<b>Tasks are Not Moving</b>	Tasks are not visibly progressing on the Learning Canvas, indicating tasks may not be sized appropriately.	Ensure tasks are broken down during Sprint Planning so they can be completed between Check-Ins.
<b>Lack of Accountability</b>	Students may not take ownership of their tasks or roadblocks, leading to unresolved issues and incomplete work.	Use the Learning Canvas for visible accountability. Encourage regular progress updates. Use color-coded notes or assign names to tasks. Peer updates increase positive peer-pressure when working in groups.
<b>Hesitant to Share Roadblocks</b>	Students may hesitate to identify issues due to fear of failure or judgment.	Foster a supportive culture where identifying roadblocks is celebrated. Recognize and appreciate when students reveal challenges and collaborate to solve them.

# Appendix

## 8.1 ACTUALIZING STANDARDS

The Check-In Routine Routine helps students cultivate essential 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and self-direction. It aligns with and makes actionable standards such as the ISTE Standards for Students and the P21 Framework for 21st-Century Learning.

### ISTE Standards for Students

ISTE Standard	Standard Description	Check-In Routine Alignment
<b>1a: Empowered Learner</b>	Students articulate learning goals, build strategies for achieving them, and reflect on their learning.	During Check-Ins, students reflect on progress toward learning goals, adjusting strategies as needed. They update the Learning Canvas, fostering ownership and self-direction.
<b>1c: Empowered Learner</b>	Students use technology to seek feedback, reflect, and improve learning outcomes.	Students might use tools like Trello, Miro, or the Learning Canvas to track progress and receive feedback, enhancing autonomy in managing their learning.
<b>2a: Digital Citizen</b>	Students manage personal data and practice safe, ethical behavior online.	During Check-Ins, students responsibly use digital tools to update tasks and collaborate with peers in shared digital spaces.
<b>4a: Innovative Designer</b>	Students use technology to identify and solve problems creatively.	Check-Ins enable students to review roadblocks and collaborate on solutions using digital tools, adjusting learning pathways effectively.
<b>4b: Innovative Designer</b>	Students refine solutions based on feedback and testing.	Students iteratively refine learning strategies based on feedback during Check-Ins, adjusting plans to meet learning goals effectively.
<b>5c: Computational Thinker</b>	Students break down problems and develop models for complex issues.	The Check-In helps students break down goals into manageable tasks, continuously evaluating and refining steps to resolve challenges.
<b>6a: Creative Communicator</b>	Students choose appropriate digital tools to express ideas clearly.	Students might use digital tools to communicate progress and challenges during Check-Ins, fostering collaboration.
<b>6c: Creative Communicator</b>	Students communicate complex ideas clearly using digital media.	Using the Learning Canvas, students visually track tasks and progress, effectively communicating updates for collaboration and feedback.

## P21 Framework for 21st-Century Learning

P21 Standard	Standard Description	Learning Check-In Alignment
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	Students reason effectively and solve problems.	Check-Ins encourage assessment of progress, decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving when roadblocks are identified.
<b>Collaboration</b>	Students work effectively with others, demonstrating flexibility and shared responsibility.	The Check-In fosters collaboration as students support each other in addressing challenges and achieving goals.
<b>Communication</b>	Students articulate thoughts clearly through various forms of communication.	Check-Ins require clear communication of progress and needs, enhancing skills in articulating ideas effectively.
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b>	Students work creatively with others to develop new solutions.	During Check-Ins, students collaborate to overcome challenges and innovate strategies to achieve learning goals.
<b>Self-Direction</b>	Students set goals, monitor progress, and reflect independently.	The Check-In Routine empowers students to take responsibility for tracking progress, setting goals, and adjusting approaches as needed.
<b>Flexibility and Adaptability</b>	Students adapt to varied roles and learning environments, demonstrating flexibility in problem-solving.	Through Check-Ins, students adapt plans based on feedback, making necessary adjustments to meet challenges.
<b>Initiative</b>	Students take initiative by setting goals and persisting in challenges.	Check-Ins provide structure for students to identify roadblocks, set next steps, and persist in reaching goals despite obstacles.
<b>Accountability</b>	Students demonstrate accountability by visualizing each student's progress,	The Check-In Routine fosters accountability by requiring students to regularly report progress to their peers, identify obstacles, and adjust their plans based on team feedback.

## 8.2 EVIDENCE-BASED IMPACT OF THE AGILE CLASSROOMS CHECK-IN ROUTINE

The Check-In Routine in Agile Classrooms serves as a formative assessment rooted in well-established psychological and educational theories. By leveraging Check-Ins, students are encouraged to reflect on their progress, make necessary course corrections, and collaborate with their peers, all of which enhance self-regulation, academic achievement, collaboration, and emotional well-being.

Theory/Research	Key Concepts	Check-In Routine Alignment
<b>Self-Determination Theory (Deci &amp; Ryan)</b>	Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness	Autonomy: Students assess their progress and update the Learning Canvas, fostering self-direction. Competence: Frequent feedback boosts student confidence and engagement. Relatedness: Collaborative Check-Ins build community and peer support.
<b>Goal-Setting and Feedback (Locke &amp; Latham)</b>	Clear, specific, and challenging goals improve performance	Students use Check-Ins to break down goals, receive feedback, and make iterative improvements, reinforcing a growth mindset. The Learning Canvas visually supports goal-setting and progress tracking.
<b>Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning (Flavell, Zimmerman)</b>	Monitoring, adaptation, reflection	The Check-In Routine mirrors the performance phase of Zimmerman's model, focusing on: Monitoring: Students review their progress. Adaptation: They adjust strategies as needed. Reflection: After each Check-In, students evaluate the effectiveness of their plans and adjust accordingly.
<b>Scaffolding and Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky)</b>	Scaffolding, collaboration, peer support	The Spectrum of Choice guides students through levels of autonomy as they demonstrate readiness. Teachers and peers scaffold progress within the Zone of Proximal Development, encouraging collaborative problem-solving.
<b>Formative Assessment (Black &amp; William; Hattie &amp; Timperley)</b>	Continuous feedback improves learning outcomes	Check-Ins provide regular, low-stakes feedback, allowing for frequent adjustments in real time. Hattie and Timperley's research highlights feedback as one of the most powerful drivers of learning.
<b>Collaborative Learning and Well-Being (Bandura)</b>	Peer feedback, shared responsibility, emotional resilience	Collaboration during Check-Ins helps students develop teamwork skills and promotes emotional well-being through peer support and accountability.
<b>Flow State and Engagement (Csikszentmihalyi)</b>	The balance between challenge and skill fosters a state of flow	Check-Ins help students assess whether their tasks match their skill levels, allowing them to enter a productive flow state where they are fully engaged in learning and motivated to continue progressing.

## 8.3 TOOLS FOR THE CHECK-IN ROUTINE

The tools used in the Check-In Routine are designed to promote visibility and accessibility, helping students track their tasks and goals in real-time. These tools act as **learning radiators**, making the process and progress transparent and engaging for students. Below are some of the commonly used tools:

TOOL	DESCRIPTION
<b>Learning Canvas</b>	A visual artifact used to organize and track the Learning Backlog Items (LBIs) and tasks selected for the current Sprint. It helps students map out goals and monitor progress. Different formats can be downloaded from <a href="https://learn.agileclassrooms.com/agile-learning-canvas">https://learn.agileclassrooms.com/agile-learning-canvas</a> .
<b>Sticky Notes or Index Cards on a Board</b>	Physical tools that can be moved and rearranged on a visible board, providing a tactile method for planning and tracking progress. Easy to update and adjust in class.
<b>Digital Tools</b>	Online collaboration platforms such as Trello or Miro allow students to digitally track tasks, update progress, and collaborate remotely, making them ideal for team-based learning. Trello: <a href="https://trello.com">https://trello.com</a> Miro: <a href="https://miro.com">https://miro.com</a>
<b>Agile Learning Heads Up Display (HUD)</b>	A physical trifold board that displays the Learning Canvas and other Agile Classrooms Learning Artifacts. It provides a hands-on method for interacting with the plan, making goals more tangible. Learn how to set it up at <a href="https://methodsmentor.substack.com/p/heads-up-display">https://methodsmentor.substack.com/p/heads-up-display</a> .

## 8.4 SCRUM ROOTS AND INSPIRATION

The **Check-In Routine** draws inspiration from the **Daily Scrum** (often called the Standup) used in the Scrum framework to promote collaboration, communication, and progress tracking. However, in educational settings, certain adaptations are necessary to suit the unique needs of students and classroom environments. These differences are why we refer to it as the **Check-In** rather than the **Daily Scrum**. Below is a comparison of the key differences:

Aspect	Daily Scrum (Professionals)	Check-In (K12 Education)
<b>Frequency</b>	Must occur daily, as team members work together full-time on the same projects and products.	Happens less frequently, usually during each class period, as students don't work on the same project or subject every day.
<b>Self-Management</b>	Teams are self-managing, as they consist of adults and professionals.	K12 students are developing self-management skills, so the Check-In is scaffolded based on their abilities.
<b>Duration</b>	Timeboxed to a maximum of 1 minutes.	Shorter, about 5-10 minutes, to fit within the class period.
<b>Purpose</b>	Focused on professional work progress and maintaining team alignment.	Supports student collaboration, tracks learning progress, and addresses obstacles. In project-based learning (PBL), it also tracks deliverables.
<b>Participants</b>	Primarily used by adult professionals in a corporate or project-based environment.	Tailored for K12 students who are learning to work collaboratively and manage their progress in school.
<b>Role of Facilitator</b>	The Scrum Master may facilitate if requested, but the team is self-organizing and expected to manage itself.	Teachers often play an active facilitative role, guiding students as they develop self-management and collaborative skills over time.
<b>Assessment and Feedback</b>	No formal assessment, focused on team members keeping each other accountable to the Sprint Goal.	Teachers provide formative feedback to help students reflect on their learning and adjust strategies.
<b>Collaboration</b>	The Daily Scrum is always team-based, designed for self-managing teams working on shared goals.	The Check-In can be used for both individual students or student teams, with scaffolding provided to su

## 8.5 GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Agile</b>	In the context of education, Agile refers to a set of practices and principles that promote adaptability, collaboration, and continuous improvement. It emphasizes flexibility in response to changing needs, self-directed learning, and regular reflection to enhance learning outcomes.
<b>Agile Classrooms Framework</b>	A 21st-century skills development framework that applies Agile methodologies to enhance student engagement, self-direction, collaboration, and adaptability in learning.
<b>Check-In Routine</b>	A 5–10 minute self-directed routine that happens frequently during the Learning Sprint. It helps students monitor their progress, adapt their goals, and request support. Mapped to Self-Regulation Skill: Monitoring, where students track their progress and adjust strategies as needed.
<b>Learning Zones</b>	The Learning Zones framework consists of <b>four zones</b> that guide students toward greater responsibility and collaborative decision-making in their learning. Each zone represents a level of <b>student choice</b> and <b>collaboration</b> , gradually supporting the development of self-directed learning and teamwork skills.
<b>Learning Backlog</b>	A prioritized list of learning goals, objectives, or project deliverables that students aim to achieve over time. It serves as a flexible roadmap for the Learning Sprint, where selected goals are moved into active focus for completion.
<b>Learning Canvas</b>	A visual tool used to map out specific tasks related to the Learning Sprint, track progress, and monitor ongoing work. It helps students organize their actions in relation to learning goals and project deliverables outlined in the Learning Backlog. Some might refer to this as a Kanban board or a Scrum board.
<b>Learning Sprint</b>	A short, time-boxed period (typically 4 weeks or less) during which students work toward completing specific learning goals and project deliverables. Learning Sprints are iterative cycles designed to foster continuous improvement, and each Sprint includes five self-directed learning routines.
<b>Routines</b>	Structured, repeatable processes in Agile Classrooms that are essential for developing self-direction. Each of the five routines (Backlog Refinement, Planning, Check-In, Review, Retrospective) guides students through the critical phases of forethought, monitoring, evaluation, and reflection.
<b>Spectrum of Choice</b>	A framework that defines the progression of student autonomy in the Check-In Routine, moving from lower to higher student choice as students gain more responsibility for decision-making.
<b>Spectrum of Collaboration</b>	A framework that outlines how students' collaboration evolves, from working individually to collaborating in teams during the Check-In Routine.

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# Further Learning and Final Thoughts

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## Thank You Dear Educator,

I'm thrilled to see you embracing Agile methodologies in your classroom. As the founder of Agile Classrooms, I've witnessed the transformative impact of these practices on student engagement and learning. By fostering a culture of collaboration, adaptability, and continuous improvement, you're empowering your students to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Remember, Agile Classrooms is a flexible framework designed to adapt to your unique context. Don't hesitate to experiment and innovate as you embark on this journey.

Thank you for your dedication to education. Together, we're shaping the future one Agile classroom at a time.

Warm regards,



### John Miller

Founder, Agile Classrooms

[john@agileclassrooms.com](mailto:john@agileclassrooms.com)

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is a resource to inspire and support your teaching practice. Feel free to use it as is, modify it, or adapt parts to suit your classroom needs.

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