

The Advantages of Blogging As A Classroom Activity

What's great about blogging?

1. Keeps the teacher's "finger on the pulse" of discussion, growth, and curiosity of the group.
2. Promotes sharing and communication using the hook of expressive and interpersonal qualities of immediate response among writers in your classroom - in and around the world.
3. Promotes legitimate business skills (corporate blogs are going mainstream).
4. "Such a potentially rich set of online writing activities ...incorporates familiar writing skills like summary, paraphrases, and the development of voice."[\[3\]](#)

Teachers And Blogs: Where To Begin

Want to blog, but not sure where to start? Think about whether you are most comfortable writing about classroom content or classroom information first. The following will help you decide:

Start by publishing information, such as

- Weekly reports about what will be taught during the upcoming week, how it will be taught, and why.
- Background information enhancing classroom topics that create context for students and for parents.
- Homework assignments.
- Descriptions of projects, including procedures, expectations, suggested parent involvement, assessment rubrics and links to last year's projects.
- Achievements of students, classes, teachers, school support and administrative staff (in order to build an environment of success, recognition, and positive expectations) [\[4\]](#).
- With this technique, teachers will need to drive their audience to their publication for the purist of motives. Just as students rarely cruise the library shelves and pluck books off shelves for skimming without being herded there, teachers must also teach students to access and value the information they are providing.
- For a good example of classroom informational blogging, visit [Mr. Martin's Science Blog](#)[\[5\]](#) or [Mr. Fisher's](#) wonderful mishmash of information and basics in his edublog[\[6\]](#).

Or start with a content-based or instructional blog

Enhance the communication, writing, and learning of your students with blogs focused entirely on lesson content. The prompt should “prompt” critical thinking and display of knowledge, and it can be PBL formatted. There are many options.

- See [Ms. Hyche’s Activity Summary\[7\]](#) about the movement of air and her closure technique;
- See [Mindy’s Blog\[8\]](#), where a math class discusses probability and other math-skill related problems;
- And in this [blog](#), calculus teacher Mr. Kuropatwa [\[9\]](#)invited his students to comment and ask questions about each of his lecture slides, continuing a classroom discussion.

The Difference Between Blogging and Edublogging

Educators are jumping on the bandwagon of blogging as a way to reach and communicate with students in their digital worlds. The research for **educational blogging** is showing positive results with classroom blogging - improved writing and dramatically improved attitudes toward learning - when blogs are used successfully with students. This is great, and [edublogging](#) can be valuable, but most teachers often decide to blog without realizing they are about to sink their typing fingertips into a clash of cultures and expectations. The difference between edublogging and teen blogging is staggeringly bright, and those who do not note the distinction between the two may be surprised by the results of their classroom online writing efforts.

The Lions

Students expect blogs to be relaxed, instantaneous, and ultimately free from rules, consequences, and time restrictions. In the online world of our preteens and teens, blogs are expected to provoke and shock as most voluntary adolescents write voluntarily online in blogs seeking personal response. In the digital realm, blogs for teens are emotional grafetti walls, places to spray their opinions and desires with abandon and glee, as unlike emails or school work as lions are from lambs. Our digital adolescent writers watch for reaction –ahem, blog responses - with anticipation and relish.

The Lambs

Teachers love the energy and focus students seem to expend in chats and emails from their friends. They expect that transference of energy and emotion to their educational blogs and often run into a bewildering wall of abbreviations and insults. What happened? Where did this shortened gibberish come from? Answer: expectations were never expressed. Teachers expect student responses to be well written, respectful, grammatically correct, accurate, focused, and gentle. They expect to see opinionated writing courteously phrased or backed by opinion.

With this dichotomy, it is no surprise that teachers blanch and students “forget to post” after their first response.

Send Out an Invitation with Driving Directions

A few minutes of learning needs to occur on **both sides** of the fence in order for all parties to be happy. Teachers and students should know what is expected before a power button is pushed on a computer or a blog code is released.

Practical Ethics: What Teachers Should Tell Students

- Class blogs, or edublogs, are the same as classroom space. Casual language is encouraged, but street language is not tolerated. Speech that is inappropriate for class should not be written into the blog. Respect the writing, and ultimately, the feelings, of others contributing to the blog.
- You may express your opinion or debate with other students as long as your blog conduct and writing is courteous and non-harmful. Always back up what you say with a fact or example, most often drawn from your studies or learning experiences. Single words or sentences are rarely enough to communicate properly.
- Class blogs are a tool for learning, and as such, personal comments about others, yourself, or unrelated activities, should not be posted. Blogs are not personal diaries. You can always compliment great comments by other bloggers and other writing within the blog.
- Never post your complete name or personal information; this will keep you will be safe online.

Commenting: The Learned Skill

The type of comment or written response a teacher wants to see is **vastly different** from what a student initially wants to post. Again, a meeting of minds should occur before keys begin to click on the keyboards.

1. Show good examples . For example,

I admire your ability of pointing out (by blogging) little things that others don't take the time to mention. After reading your post about "commenting", it makes so much sense to talk about and make other bloggers (especially newbies) aware of its importance. I'd like to add something to your post though. I read about a presenter a few weeks ago and how discouraged she was when people were a blogging awful things about her and her presentation:

Be kind.

Think before you respond to a blog post, especially when the post contradicts your belief.

Be professional.

Don't attack a blogger personally.

Say what you want to say, but use polite and professional language.

Thanks for pointing us newbies into the direction of commenting...[\[1\]](#)

Another great example of blogging can be found in Cynthia Pina's edublog where students combined studies of Shakespearian plays with psychoanalysis techniques:

Okay, check this out. In my opinion, I think Macbeth has to have schizophrenia. I did a little more research and found something different than before, an article on Symptoms of Schizophrenia in MacBeth on <http://www.planetpapers.com/Assets/1574.php> and I'm assuming it's a student writing an essay, but she brought up some good points that even have to do with Macbeth's wife, Lady Macbeth. They seem to be suffering from the same disorder. It states, "Macbeth's main symptom is detachment from reality." It basically explains how in the play, Macbeth and his wife were both seeing things, and having some sort of hallucinations very often, and all having to do with Duncan and Banquo's death. The three witches even had a part in it. Although Lady Macbeth was more of a sleep talker. "They (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth) became detached from reality and spoke in crazy incoherent sentence fragments. What's the cause? Guilt is a major possibility." [\[2\]](#)

2. Teach how to comment – Vickie Davis has a great edublog about teaching students to respond to edublogs at <http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/2006/08/how-to-comment-like-king-or-queen.html>.

3. Reward with publication – admittedly, every student response in a blog is not going to be stellar. Reward great commenting by publishing the top % of your topic. Archive the rest.

[1] <http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/2006/08/how-to-comment-like-king-or-queen.html#c115481045688181474>

[2] http://www.classblogmeister.com/blog.php?user_id=78190&blogger_id=78197

[3] http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogsphere/remediation_genre.html

[4] Warlick, David. "Blog Rules." EDTECH: Focus on K12. 00 Aug 2007. CDW Corporation. 25 Oct 2007 <<http://www.edtechmag.com/k12/issues/november-december-2006/blog-rules.html>>.

[5] <http://www.nisd.net/taft/classrooms/martin/IndexMain.htm>

[6] <http://mr-fisher.edublogs.org/>

[7] <http://laceyhyche.edublogs.org/2007/09/07/the-movement-of-air/>

[8] <http://period5mw.blogspot.com/>

[9] <http://apcalc06.blogspot.com/search/label/Applications%20of%20Integrals>