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# Planning a Blog

Once you determine you would like to use one or more blogs in your classroom, you will need to consider which blog platform would be best to use. In the initial planning stages, ask questions about how you plan to use the blog in your classroom, including the tasks you expect students to complete on the blog. In general, you will need to establish instructional goals (teacher-generated) as well as community (student-generated) goals for the blog(s).

Questions to ask:

- ✓ What is the general purpose of the blog?

- ✓ What are my instructional goals for the blog(s)?

- ✓ What goals do the students have as a classroom community for the blog(s)?

- ✓ What do I want students to gain from the experience?

- ✓ Do students have enough keyboarding (typing) skills to be able to successfully write and post entries on a blog? If not, how can they learn those skills? Or, how can their work get posted to the blog?

- ✓ How often and how much content do I expect students to post? Do I want a formal schedule to track students' posting?

- ✓ Do I want readers outside the classroom to be able to read the blog?

- ✓ Who do I want to comment on the blog? Anyone or only registered users?

- ✓ Do I want to be able to moderate comments before they post to the blog?

- ✓ Who do I want to allow to post (contribute) to the blog?

- ✓ Will students have their own blogs that they can use as a portfolio for their work? If so, how will other class members access them to make comments on student work?

- ✓ What page elements do I want to include?

- ✓ Which blog platform will best suit these purposes?

- ✓ Will I grade student work posted online? If so, how?

If a school or district has firewalls or other restrictions on Internet use, that may also affect the choice of setup for a blog. The blog platforms suggested in this book should be accessible through any computer that has access to the Internet.

- ✓ Sample: "Parent/Guardian Permission Form," pages 67–68

You may also wish to gather student information prior to setting up a classroom blog, particularly if student blogs will be linked to the classroom blog home page. "Student Blog Input," page 31, or "Planning My Blog," page 39, will assist you in gathering this information. Enlist a volunteer if possible to do the actual input, for example, a parent or other classroom aide. Older students may enter their own information depending on the amount of Internet experience they have had in the classroom.

# Using Blogs in the Classroom

You can group students in different configurations to use blogs in the classroom, such as having students work individually or in a group or blog team. Other examples include contributing to classroom discussion forums or posting their work individually in e-portfolios.

## Things to Think About

✓ Consider the audience—why someone would visit the blog

✓ Establish goals

✓ Use a schedule for posting

✓ Allow students to vary length of entries

✓ Have students write on themes

✓ Provide content resources for students

✓ Have students use digital cameras and scanners to incorporate graphics and other media into a blog

✓ Match the tool (a post on a blog, new page on the blog, *PowerPoint* presentation, video, webpage, Wiki space, etc.) to the project based on the authentic purpose and audience

## Ways to Use Blogs in the Classroom

| Teachers | Students |
|---|---|
| post class information | write own blog |
| post assignments | reflect on what they think about specific topics as they write about those topics |
| reading material for students | reflective journal |
| practice exercises | writing journal |
| link resources that relate to topics of current study | learning log to record new things they have learned |
| organize/conduct in-class discussions | sharing experiences |
| content-related blogs to share ideas, tips, etc. with colleagues | assignment review—receiving feedback from teacher as they turn in assignments—a record of incremental progress |
| networking | dialogue for group work—blogs become a paper trail to keep tabs on who does what |
| connect content and curriculum to blog technology | E-portfolios of student work |
| academic subject areas: math, science, social studies, etc. | student newspapers |

# Learning the Language

## Objective

Given an introduction to blogging terms and reference materials, students will learn the meanings of terms and create illustrated dictionaries or glossaries.

## Materials

- "Blog Terminology," pages 20–21, one copy for teacher reference, one copy for display as needed
- Index cards
- World maps
- Foreign dictionaries or access to Internet
- White construction paper, 9" x 12" (23 cm x 30 cm), one piece per student
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers
- Access to *Microsoft Word*, *Microsoft PowerPoint*, *Microsoft Publisher*, or other desktop publishing software (optional)
- Dictionary, thesaurus (optional)
- Access to online dictionary, thesaurus (optional)
- Globe (optional)

## Preparation

Use index cards and the list of terms on "Blog Terminology," pages 20–21, to prepare word cards, with one word on each card. Prepare a second set of cards with one definition on each card. Display the world maps around the classroom and post word cards with the maps. Do not post the definition cards.

Gather foreign words for common terms such as "hello," "good-bye," "computer," etc.

## Opening

Share with students different ways people say "hello," "good-bye," "computer," and a few other common terms around the world. Ask students which terms they could understand without knowing how to speak the language. Explain that some fields of study have a common language, for example— many medical terms are from Greek or Latin, many legal terms come from Latin, and much of the terminology they will learn about blogging originated in English, as the majority of the Internet structure originated in the United States.

## Directions

1. Ask students how they would define the term "blog-o-sphere." Direct students' attention to the map and word card displays. Explain that each student will receive a definition card. He or she will find the word that their card defines posted somewhere around the room. Students may use dictionaries as necessary.

2. Students will work in groups after they have matched the word cards and definitions. You may wish to have them find their word cards in groups if that works better logistically.

# Learning the Language *(cont.)*

3. Once students have matched their definition cards with the correct word cards, have them work in their groups.

4. Groups will create glossary pages to define and illustrate their terms.

## Closing

Have students share their pages with other members of the class. Bind the pages to create a class Blogging dictionary; you may want to make more than one copy for classroom use or to share with another class.

## Extension

A. Have students use the word and definition cards to quiz each other on blog terminology, playing a game similar to "Go Fish."

B. Students may use desktop publishing software to create their glossary pages, if desired.