

Classroom Blogging With Intermediate Students

by

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Bachelor of Education, University of British Columbia, 1992

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 1991

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This project examines classroom blogging at the intermediate (Grades 3-5) level. Blogging is a way for teachers to integrate new literacies into their classrooms. The two guiding questions for this project were: (1) How can students' classroom-based blogging be realized and supported at the elementary level? and (2) What are the best practices for implementing classroom blogs? References to theoretical frameworks and a review of literature supports the use of blogs in classrooms. This literature suggests that blogs help improve students' written output by motivating them to write; encourages a collaborative setting with the peer feedback feature of blogs; and fosters metacognitive awareness by enabling students to reflect on previous work. This project offers a guide for teachers new to blogging as it provides curricular information, cyber safety and digital citizenship lessons. In addition, suggestions for blog platforms, criteria and assessment, and exemplars are offered. The project ends with a discussion of digital writing, blogging ideas, and peer feedback instruction. After reading this project, teachers should have a better understanding of what they should consider, or do, in order to successfully implement student blogs into their classroom practice.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Contextualizing My Project

Digital-based communication technologies are ubiquitous and utilized in almost all aspects of Canadian society including education. This fact spurred my desire to investigate, for my Master of Education project, how technology is being used in elementary schools as a way for students to represent their thinking. Because technological use in schools can include a range of platforms and activities, I narrowed my focus to specifically examine: (1) How can students' classroom-based blogging be realized and supported at the elementary level? and (2) What are the best practices for implementing classroom blogs? In this first chapter, I detail how I initially became interested in blogging with my own students. In Chapter Two, I examine the current and relevant research literature regarding blogging in academic settings as well as some of the affordances and challenges associated with students' blogging. The final chapter of this project outlines the best practices framework or guidebook that I use, and that other teachers may consider when they implement blogs as part of student literacy learning into their intermediate classrooms.

Arriving at my Question

Lifelong learner.

Although I have taught in British Columbia's public school system for over twenty years, and may be considered by some as a 'veteran teacher', I still love learning new ways to improve my teaching practice. I shudder at the thought of teaching the same material the same way year after year, and I am a teacher who frequently participates in

professional inquiry groups or collaborative learning projects so that I can enhance my teaching practice. Because it seemed to me only natural to extend my professional learning even further, I applied to the University of Victoria's Master of Education program within a cohort that has examined changes to literacy teaching and learning in our digital age.

The professional area that is of particular interest to me is students' personal and expository writing. As stated in British Columbia's (BC) most recent K- 8 English Language Arts curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2013), the ability to create text enables students "to construct meaning, express ideas, develop and deepen understanding of language and literacy, and think critically, creatively, and reflectively" (n.p.). In addition, this new curriculum maintains that students will know and understand a variety of communication forms including digital texts. As I have seen in my 20 plus years as a classroom teacher, the quality of students' writing in terms of their ability to create coherent, organized content with minimal errors in the standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and so on has continuously diminished. In fact, when I compared a piece of writing that I completed when I was in grade four to a piece completed by my own grade four students I was struck by the disparity between the two pieces. (It should be noted that I was not a gifted student by any means; instead, I was just a regular, keen, nine year old!) This disparity led me to question why there was such a difference in students' writing. More importantly, I began to consider how I could help my students improve their written output in terms of content, organization, and conventions. Because improving student written output became my focus, my professional development has concentrated on writing processes. From 2000 to 2013, some of the workshops I attended

included Adrienne Gear's *Writing Power* (2006), Susan Augustyn's *Achieving Excellence in Writing* (2004) and district in-servicing on the *Six Plus One Writing Traits* (Spandel, 2005). Although I obtained useful information and strategies from all of these workshops, it was a professional learning workshop that utilized the writing workshop and mini-lesson approach of educators such as Atwell (2002) and Calkins (1994) that really changed my writing instruction. I valued how these writing theorists emphasized *student choice* in terms of content, purpose, and genre as well as how they emphasized the importance of writing for *authentic audiences*. When students write for an authentic audience, they are not simply writing to be assessed by a teacher. Instead, students write to communicate to a larger audience. Moreover, I valued the mini-lesson idea as students received an actual strategy for improving their writing. The feedback and conferencing that followed helped my students to see and understand their writing strengths and weaknesses. After applying this approach over the course of a year, I noticed significant gains in my students' written output in terms of content, style, and conventions.

I was delighted to discover that the writing workshop approach could be applied to a digital medium (Hicks, 2009) because today's students are exposed to digital-based technologies outside of school on a daily basis. Because of this digital influx at home, it seems only natural to include these technologies in our schools in a more academic context. By making a conscious effort to include new technologies, teachers are arguably transforming the nature of education as we prepare our students for the future.

The Challenge for Teachers of Writing

I believe that incorporating new literacies into teacher practice is vital to preparing our students for their futures. Along with traditional writing instruction,

teachers should move their students beyond paper and pen compositions so that students “become motivated and effective writers online and offline, now and in the future, in the classroom and beyond” (McGrail & Davis, 2011, p. 433). Parents should also understand that today’s education must offer learning opportunities that are relevant and meaningful to contemporary students (Canadians for 21st Century Learning & Innovation, 2012). Technological inclusion in classrooms allows students to bring their out-of-school interests, activities, and skill-sets into schools. The National Council of Teachers of English (2013) (NCTE) states that “as society and technology change, so does literacy” (p. 1). As a result, teaching practices must also transform accordingly to meet the ever-changing needs of students in the 21st century.

This transformation is starting to occur as educators become aware that we need to include new technologies in our classrooms. Having taught for over 20 years, I have seen trends come and go. In my opinion, because technology inundates our lives, inclusion of digital literacies into educational practices is a shift that is not going to disappear. In fact, as older teachers retire and *digital natives* (Prensky, 2001), or people who have grown up using technology, become educators, we will see new literacies practiced in more classrooms. Increased technological inclusion will occur because these digital natives are more comfortable with technology than the previous generation (Wagner, 2012, as cited in Rubin, 2012).

Blogging

Blogs are one way of incorporating technology and new literacies into intermediate classrooms. A blog, which is short for *weblog*, is a webpage that allows people to post and comment on entries (Zawilinski, 2009). Blog entries appear in reverse

chronological order so the most recent entries appear at the top of the page. Although I have been aware of blogs for over ten years, I had not considered blogging in an academic setting with my own students until I saw how a secondary colleague was using them with his class. He told me that his students valued using technology to express themselves, and that the use of computers actually motivated his students to write. After some deliberation, I figured that blogging would also be possible with elementary-aged students. If students are required to read and respond to entries, an explicit *reading-writing connection* occurs when students blog.

Before implementing blogs into my own class, I explored literature around academic blogging because I wanted to see if blogs were an educationally sound medium for student representation. The questions that guided my search of the literature were: (1) How can students' classroom-based blogging be realized and supported at the elementary level? and (2) What are the best practices for implementing classroom blogs? The answers to these questions from my search of the literature helped to prove to me that blogging is an attainable method of incorporating new literacies, especially in relation to students' writing, into contemporary intermediate classrooms.

Having contextualized how I became interested in blogging as a way to incorporate new literacies into my own teaching practice in this section, Chapter 2 investigates primary research regarding academic blogs. This research will then critically inform Chapter Three which outlines and discusses the best practices for incorporating blogs into intermediate classrooms with the goal of informing my intermediate colleagues' consideration of including new literacies, particularly blogging, with their students.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In this chapter I present a theoretical framework for academic blogging and then I investigate the relevant research literature related to educational blogging with elementary students. The research included in this project adheres to *student-centred* and *constructivist* principles (Dewey, 1928; Piaget, 1952) whereby learning is centred upon each individual child; *social-constructivist* theory (Vygotsky, 1978) which states that learning is a social process; and *transactional* theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) which emphasizes that a transaction occurs between the reader and writer. In addition, a *new literacy* model (Gee, 1989; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) is discussed that looks at the intertwining of new technological aspects and the accompanying mindset necessary for successful blog implementation.

After these theoretical frameworks are presented, recent research around how blogging is used in classrooms is discussed. These researchers look at how writing performance improved with student blogging; how peer feedback is an essential component of blogging; how blogs motivate students to write; and how blogs provide a medium for student reflection and thus higher order thinking skills. Chapter Two ends with a brief discussion around how blogs are used for e-portfolios, personal information management systems, and multimodal representation. In summary, Chapter Two outlines how blogs are used in an academic setting as well as their affordances and challenges.

Theoretical Frameworks

A number of educational theories are relevant to academic blogging. Student blogging adheres to constructivist (Dewey, 1928) and social constructivist (Vygotsky,

1978) principles which emphasize that the students are at the center of their learning and that they construct knowledge in a social atmosphere. Blogging also exemplifies Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory which highlights the relationship between the reader and writer. The final theory represented with blogging is the new literacy theory (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). This more recent theory, which focuses on technology and the accompanying progressive attitudes towards technology, is particularly pertinent to blogging because blogging is an example of digital literacy. An explanation of these theories will now follow.

Student-Centered Learning and Constructivism.

Because technology inundates everyday life, it seems only natural for teachers to integrate technology into their classrooms. The idea of integrating children's out-of-school interests, skills, and experiences into classrooms is not a new idea; in fact, this idea can be traced back to the progressivist ideas of John Dewey in the early 20th century. In *My Pedagogic Creed* (1928), Dewey stated that "the school must represent present life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighbourhood, or on the playground" (p. 35). When teachers allow students to embrace the same activities in school that are performed outside of school, students have a heightened interest in their learning because learning is centered upon their interests. In other words, a student-centered educational approach that focuses on student interests, skills, experiences, and activities facilitates students learning.

This student-centered approach can be applied to the use of technology in a school setting. A student-centered, technological, classroom environment allows students, who use technology daily outside of school, to bring their technological knowledge into the

classroom. Teachers need to appreciate their students' technological prowess and capitalize on it in their classrooms as students are more likely to learn when they can confidently use their out-of-school skillset. Contrary to Frank Bobbitt's (1918) industrial education model where students were considered *empty vessels* that were simply filled with information, Dewey's student-centered approach enabled students to construct their own meaning and learn at their own rate. More specifically, when Dewey stated that "the active side precedes the passive in the development of the child-nature" (p. 38), he basically meant that students are active participants in their learning.

Piaget (1952) took this idea even further with his constructivist theory when he suggested that students already bring a wealth of knowledge or prior experience to their learning (McLeod, 2015). He referred to this as a student's *schema*. Piaget stated that students learn through *assimilation*, which applies their schema to new situations and information, and *accommodation*, which occurs when existing schema does not work and needs to be adjusted to new situations. Piaget also believed that learning occurred in stages and that children constructed knowledge at each stage. This idea is called the *cognitive constructivism*.

Nearly 100 years after Dewey proposed his progressive, student-centered ideas, and Piaget wrote of constructivism, both have been used to inform British Columbia's English Language Arts curriculum. More specifically, as stated in British Columbia Ministry of Education (2013) *Transforming Curriculum and Assessment: English Language Arts* the "English Language Arts curriculum is founded on the theory of constructivism, where meaning is constructed through interaction between the individual and a range of texts and communication contexts" (p. 1). The incorporation of student

blogging into British Columbia classrooms helps to make it possible for students to be active participants and take ownership of their learning. Furthermore, blogging can provide students the freedom to explore learning opportunities that are meaningful to each individual.

Social Constructivism.

Dewey was also forward thinking in his realization that learning is social in nature. This idea differed from Piaget's cognitive constructivist theory. Instead, Dewey (1928) believed that "language...is fundamentally and primarily a social instrument [and that] language is the device for communication; it is the tool through which one individual comes to share the ideas and feelings of others" (p. 37). Again, classroom blogs afford students the opportunity to communicate back and forth about their experiences, opinions, and interests. More importantly, this student-centred approach is conducive to a rich, learning environment. The end result of this back and forth blogging communication is that both the reader and writer learn from one another.

Similar to Dewey, Lev Vygotsky (1978) also believed that social interaction played a fundamental role in one's learning. This notion came to be known as a social constructivist approach to learning. According to Vygotsky, "thinking has social origins that involves cultural and historical perspectives" (Smagorinsky, 2007, p. 62). Speech and language are integral components of this social constructivist approach to learning as "speech serves not only as [a] means of representing the world; the process of speaking itself often serves as a vehicle through which new thoughts emerge" (Smagorinsky, 2007, p.64). In other words, people learn by communicating with each other, and that

collaboration fosters a deeper understanding than learning on one's own. Smagorinsky (2013) sums up Vygotsky's ideas about the role of speech on thinking by stating:

speech...can both represent an idea and contribute to the formation of an idea, and when speech is coordinated and orchestrated to produce a text, the sign function of its form may then serve as a tool for yet new thinking by either the speaker or others. (p. 194)

Vygotsky's view of speech contributed to the *writing to learn* movement where people use writing to discover what they have to say (Smagorinsky, 2007). Because this writing is playful and experimental, students are more inclined to do it as there is less fear of being wrong. Blogging lends itself to this idea of writing to learn because students partake in a written dialogue with their peers.

Another similarity between Dewey and Vygotsky is evident in the way out-of-school experiences should be incorporated into the classroom in order to make learning meaningful. Smagorinsky (2012) outlines Vygotsky's view that:

people learn by making things that they find useful and important –that is, meaningful to them...[Learning] should involve a dialogue between what one knows through personal experience outside school (what he called *spontaneous* or *everyday concepts*) and what one learns about formal, generalizable principles (what he called the *scientific* or *everyday concepts* learned in school). (p. 198)

Thus, blogging is an avenue for students to express both their spontaneous and scientific concepts through a digital medium. Once the writers express their thoughts, the reader is free to react, respond, or transact with what was written. This process, which is known as the transactional theory, will now be discussed.

Transactional theory.

Blogging shows Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reading and writing in action because a transaction occurs between the reader and the text. In other words, a blogger initiates a transaction with the reader who then responds to what was written sometimes also by writing. Rosenblatt's theory can be applied to both the writing and reading process. In terms of the writing process, Rosenblatt (1994) asserts that "the writer is always transacting with a personal, social, and cultural environment" (p. 1072). Although the writer is free to draw on personal experiences and ideas, he/she should have an awareness of how the reader may respond. Because a reader brings his or her own unique experiences and background to a piece of text, he/she will not see the same piece of text in the same way. Depending on the purpose or circumstance, the writer may choose an *efferent* or *aesthetic stance*. An efferent stance is more objective or public in nature as the writer's primary purpose is to explain, analyze, summarize, or categorize information. In contrast, an aesthetic stance is more personal or emotive in nature and is used to communicate the writer's experiences, opinions, or feelings. As Rosenblatt (1994) states, "the selection of a predominant stance is not arbitrary, but is a function of circumstances, the writer's motives, the subject and the relation between the prospective reader or readers" (p. 1073). According to Rosenblatt, all writing falls somewhere on the efferent-aesthetic continuum. This transactional theory can be now be applied to new literacy models.

New literacies.

Lankshear and Knobel (2011) explore a socio-cultural approach to new literacies and define literacies as "socially recognized ways in which people generate,

communicate, and negotiate meanings, as members of Discourses, through the medium of encoded texts” (p. 33). This definition is broad enough to go beyond being able to simply read and write. According to Lankshear and Knobel, the amalgamation of new *technical stuff* and new *ethos stuff* is vital to the successful implementation of new literacies.

Lankshear and Knobel (2011) describe the new technical stuff as:

screens and pixels rather than paper and type, digital code rather than material print (whether printed by hand, typewriter, or press), seamlessly multimodal rather than involving distinct process for distinct modes (text, image, sound)...transmittable via electronic networks in real time, rather than via printing, hard copy publishing and post. (p. 29)

They describe the ethos stuff as a viewpoint that is “more participatory, more collaborative, and more distributive; less published, less individuated, and less author-centric than conventional literacies” (p. 29). In other words, in order to see new literacies in contemporary classrooms, teachers need to have access to the technology as well as a willingness to use it for more than simply word processing.

Educators must adopt new ethos stuff and broaden their literacy practices to include new literacies if their students are to be proficient learners in the future. The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE, 2013) outlined the skills and abilities that students need in order to be lifelong learners and succeed in the future. They suggest that in addition to being able to read and write, students must:

develop proficiency with the tools of technology; build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross culturally; design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes; manage,

analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simulation information; create, critique, analyze and evaluate multi- media texts; [and] attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments. (n.p.)

A blog can be a medium for developing the proficiencies and skills outlined above.

One cannot discuss Lankshear and Knobel's new literacy concepts without considering Gee's ideas about *Discourse* because one's Discourse comes into play when communicating with others. According to Gee (1989), "Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate worlds, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities" (pp. 6-7). Discourse with a capital D differs from discourse with a little d as discourse concerns written or spoken language. Thus, discourse is part of Discourse. Discourses have implications for new literacies because people using a variety of Discourses are brought together due to the collaborative and participatory nature of new literacies. In a 2008 interview, Gee was even more specific when he stated:

Discourses are ways of speaking/listening, writing/reading, acting, interacting, valuing, thinking, and using objects, tools, technologies, places and times to recognise and get recognised as having specific (often contested and negotiated) socially situated identities [and that] all Discourses are defined in a large part by their relationships for and against other Discourses. (Clair & Phipps, 2008, p. 93)

Gee further suggests that a 'liberating Discourse' is formed when different Discourses learn to understand and accept others. In other words, Gee envisions a society where people are both producers and consumers of digital media and interact with and accept a "*myriad of Discourses*" or a variety of different viewpoints (p. 94).

A blog fosters this myriad of Discourses because it is a forum in which all people are free to express opinions, share expertise and knowledge, and communicate feelings. In addition, people can support others by offering feedback, providing support, commiserating, showing solidarity, and enacting an affinity (Gee, 2004). The end result of such transactions, where people are collectively participating and collaborating, could be a more tolerant and accepting populace that values and appreciates diversity. In turn, a cultural remix can occur because people are learning from one another and integrating new ideas into their own culture. In order for this kind of learning to occur, students must be well-versed in *digital citizenship* or the ability to converse in a respectful manner while online. One way to increase student awareness about digitally communicating in a productive, tactful way, is to employ *exploratory talk* (Mercer, Wegerif, & Dawes, 1999) lessons with students. Exploratory talk is defined as:

talk in which partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas. Statements and suggestions are sought and offered for joint consideration. These may be challenged and counter-challenged, but challenges are justified and alternative hypotheses are offered...knowledge is made publicly accountable and reasoning is visible. (Mercer et al., 1999, p. 97)

Although exploratory talk relates to verbal exchanges, the lessons for teaching exploratory talk can be applied to blogging because the peer feedback is a written dialogue. Students should also be cognizant of *cyber safety*, or working online in a safe manner, and be aware of some of the challenges of the cyberspace. For instance, students should be taught that people can assume any identity while online so people may not always be who they say they are. Students should also be taught what to do, namely go

offline and tell an adult, if they encounter inappropriate content. As Lankshear and Knobel (2011) state, this interactivity, participation, collaboration, and dispersion of expertise and intelligence are indicative to the ‘new ethos stuff’ that occurs with new literacies, and thus, blogging.

A key feature of new literacies is the idea of a *participatory culture*. Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel (2006) define a participatory culture as:

a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passes along to novices...it is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another. (p. 3)

A blog is a medium through which a participatory culture can be fostered because the participants are free to post and comment as they see fit. Blogs afford students involvement in a participatory culture by providing opportunities which include peer-to-peer learning, consideration of others’ intellectual property, diverse cultural expression, workplace skills, and empowered conceptions of citizenship. Thus, a participatory culture is one that encourages community involvement as opposed to individual expression. When every child is able to represent his/her ideas, thoughts, and feelings, improved self-efficacy often results. The ultimate goal of a participatory culture is to encourage children to “develop the skills, knowledge, ethical frameworks, and self-confidence needed to be full participants in contemporary culture” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 8).

The participatory culture is at the root of a successful academic blog as students must participate or contribute in order for a blog to work. Otherwise, the blogger is basically just writing for him/herself. A *Community of Inquiry* or CoI (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 2000) is but one way to encourage a participatory culture. A CoI is a group of individuals who arrive at a mutual understanding through purposeful, critical discourse, and reflection in an online environment. The feedback from peers and teachers that occurs in a CoI encourages deeper reflection and thinking. Thus, teachers must encourage this CoI or participatory culture, in order to have students successfully blog.

A recent qualitative action research study (Nichols, 2012) in southwest Georgia, US focused on the participatory culture of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 who were engaged in blogging across the curriculum. Nichols intended to investigate the evolving definition of literacy in the 21st century by integrating blogging across the curriculum, to teach a modern form of digital communication to teachers and students, and to see if students' state-wide test scores would improve. Nichols believes that blogs were a format that exemplified 21st century literacy skills and encouraged a participatory culture among students; thus, blogs are an effective tool for literacy development. Nichols agreed with Jenkins et al.'s (2006) explanation of the benefits of a participatory culture, previously mentioned, as they relate to technology. She investigated whether or not this participatory culture would improve student writing by connecting schoolwork to the real world through the use of technology. In other words, she attempted to show how a blog could be used to support student writing in a technological age. She used the term *digital literacy* throughout her study and defined it as the merging and interdependence of

reading, writing, talking, listening, and viewing in both print and digital texts. Nichols stated that teachers were instrumental in promoting and implementing digital literacy in the 21st century, and that blogging across the curriculum was an accessible way to promote digital literacy.

The results of Nichols' action research project indicated that students enjoyed blogging and that they were motivated by the comments of their peers to continue to write. More importantly, blogging had a direct effect on the state-wide fifth grade mandated test scores that improved by 50% by the end of the school year. Therefore, Nichols concluded that blogs should be incorporated into intermediate classrooms.

When students have “unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 3), a *participation gap* results. This belief is similar to what has been called a *digital divide* because the digital divide is the difference between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. According to Jenkins et al. (2006), the digital divide is the difference between those who can or want to participate in online communication or be part of the participatory culture, and those who do not. Teachers are instrumental in bridging this divide so that all students can work in a collaborative setting. Tony Wagner, an Innovation Education Fellow at the Technology and Entrepreneurship Center at Harvard, further defines the digital divide in a Huffington Post interview (Rubin, 2012). He does so in two ways. The first definition considers access to technology itself. More specifically, Wagner posits that a difference occurs between schools that have the actual technology necessary to implement blogging. Unfortunately, some schools do not have the computers necessary to successfully implement a blogging program. Wagner

also discusses the digital divide in terms of teachers' willingness to incorporate new technologies into their current academic programs. This idea relates to the Lankshear and Knobel's (2011) new ethos stuff as teachers must adopt a more collaborative, participatory, linear outlook before they can even consider implementing new literacies. Because some teachers are uncomfortable with technology, they are reluctant to teach their students how to successfully use technology to become informed, digital citizens. Wagner further suggests that as older teachers, who are not technologically-inclined, retire and more digital natives become teachers, the digital divide will slowly disappear. Technology use in elementary classrooms is changing for many elementary teachers as they adopt a new ethos by moving out of their comfort-zones and make a greater effort to incorporate technology into their programs.

A further divide that teachers may encounter concerns administrative reluctance to implementing a blogging program. That is, schools that do have the computers and teachers willing to try blogging may not be granted administrative or parental permission to post student work online. Regardless of the definition, be it lack of computers, teacher willingness to use technology, or administrative reluctance to pursue new literacies, the digital divide is an obstacle that must be overcome in order to establish a successful blogging program.

Once the digital divide is conquered, students can begin to represent their thinking. Effective writing instruction will help students in this regard. Having presented a supporting and contextualizing theoretical framework above, I now turn in this literature review to presenting recent research regarding how blogging is used in classrooms. In particular I discuss through the literature how writing performance

improves with student blogging; how peer feedback is an essential component of blogging; how blogs motivate students to write; and how blogs provide a medium for student reflection and thus higher order thinking skills.

Effective Writing Instruction

Effective writing instruction is still vital to students' representations in an online environment. Lucy Calkins (1994) was one scholar involved in revolutionizing writing instruction by emphasizing the student's role in learning to write (Graves, 1983; Murray, 1968). This idea embodies constructivist ideologies. She stressed that students must have more choice in their content, purpose, and audience. This control helps students see that "writers learn not only that they have something to say and a voice with which to say it, but also that somebody values what they have to say" (Calkins, 1994, p. 88). This idea is instrumental as students learn to write for a real-world purposes and for real audiences.

Calkins (1994) also emphasized writing through a workshop approach. The integral components of the writing workshop include mini-lessons, work time (writing and conferring), peer conferring and/or response groups, share sessions, and public celebrations. The writing workshop approach enables students to transition through the stages of the writing, namely, rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing. Through participation in the writing workshop "students will learn to write by writing and by living with a sense of I am one who writes" (Calkins, 1994, p. 83). In other words, student writing will improve simply by representing their thoughts and ideas.

In *The Digital Writing Workshop* (2009), Troy Hicks adapted Calkins' (1994) writing workshop tenets for the technological age. He states that digital writing must include:

... student choice about topic and genre, active revision (constant feedback between peer and teacher), author's craft as a basis for instruction (through minilessons and conferences), publication beyond classroom walls, [and] broad visions of assessment that include both process and product. (p. 1)

Like Calkins, Hicks (2009) agrees that teachers should “teach the writer, not the writing” (p. 1) in order to help students improve their writing abilities. After all, our goal as educators is to help our students become better writers and to not simply edit a piece of writing. Hicks sums up this notion of intertwining Calkins' writing workshop approach with technology when he states that:

... if we engage students in real writing tasks and we use technology in such a way that it complements their innate need to find purposes and audiences for their work, we can have them engaged in a digital writing process that focuses first on the writer, then on the writing, and lastly on the technology. (p. 8)

Hicks (2013) goes on to suggest that “technology provides the real audiences, purposes, and publication venues that allow [teachers and students] to grow their communities of writers, to discover digital writing, and to invite parents and families into the process” (p. 2). According to Hicks, technology can complement a writing program and thus improve student written output.

In a qualitative case study (McGrail & Davis, 2011) researchers set out to explore if blogging affected student writing development at the elementary level. McGrail and Davis were particularly interested in students' attitude toward writing, and if students were more aware of content, voice, connections, relationships, thinking, and craft when blogging. This study was unique in comparison to other blogging research because it

focused on students at the elementary school level instead of higher grade levels. The majority of research on educational blogs has typically been used to investigate high school or college students' experiences (Boling, 2008). Their research concluded that blogging did indeed have a positive effect on students' writing. These positive effects included improved motivation to write well, increased student confidence when writing, improved student awareness toward their audience, and improved voice in their writing. As a result of these findings, McGrail and Davis concluded that blogs should be implemented at the elementary level.

Another recent study (Karsak, Fer, & Orhan, 2014) investigated whether cooperative and/or individual weblogs would enhance writing performance. Twenty-one Grade 5 Turkish students participated in this mixed methods research study. The students were divided into two groups: the experimental group which included twelve students who worked on a cooperative weblog, and the control group which was composed of the remaining nine students who wrote individual weblogs. A writing performance exam was given pre- and post-test to both groups in order to assess ideas and content, sentence fluency, writing rules and organization.

The quantitative results of Karsak et al.'s research revealed that the control group's writing results improved more than the cooperative group. More specifically, the individual students in the control group scored higher than the experimental group on the ideas/content portion of the assessment. No statistically significant difference occurred between the groups on the sections related to fluency, writing rules, and organization. The researchers speculated that the control group fared better because individual students had more control over their weblogs, and hence, their writing. The students were

encouraged to take responsibility and ownership for their writing. In addition, the dynamics between students in the experimental group may have negatively affected the overall writing performance. Student conflict or disagreements within the experimental group accounted for the lower results on the ideas and content portion of the post-test assessment.

The qualitative results of Karsak et al.'s study varied as interviews from the students in the experimental group revealed differences in opinions related to working independently or cooperatively on the weblogs. More specifically, some students in the experimental group preferred working collaboratively while others did not. The students that enjoyed working collaboratively stated that more information was exchanged, the information was more detailed and that discussion facilitated learning. The students who disliked the cooperative nature of weblog felt progress was hindered due to conflicts between group members and intolerant attitudes. Student views related to comment feedback was generally positive in nature for both groups as the students felt the comments helped them notice errors in their writing. As a result, the students felt their writing improved. The next section investigates research studies (Chen, Lieu, Shih, Wu, & Yuan, 2011; Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014) that specifically analyze how peer feedback positively influences student willingness to write.

Peer Feedback

Peer feedback falls under the tenets of social constructivism as well as transactional theory because students respond and learn from one another. A number of researchers (Chen, Lieu, Shih, Wu, & Yuan, 2011; Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014) investigated how peer feedback influences blogging.

The first study that demonstrated how peer feedback with blogs influences student writing at the elementary level was conducted by Chen et al. (2011). They adopted a pre- and post-test design to investigate the effectiveness of using peer feedback with blogging to improve the writing of 33 Grade 5 students. That is, they wanted to see if the peer feedback employed with blogging could lead to greater inspiration to write as well as greater writing practice. The peer feedback was divided into basic feedback which referred to either “thumbs-up or thumbs-down comments” (Chen, et al., 2011, p. E3); and elaborated feedback that was comments that provided suggestions on the blog articles organization, format, content, wording and conventions. The results of Chen et al.’s (2011) study confirmed a number of positive attributes about how blogging improves student writing. The most important attribute was that the quality of student writing improved thanks to the elaborated feedback. Moreover, this feedback helped student understanding of the editing process as they learned from each other and adjusted their work accordingly. Student interviews revealed that they enjoyed the experience, and that they preferred editing on a computer because it was faster and more convenient than editing on paper. Thus, the peer feedback made the students more aware of their written communications, helped initiate the editing process, and improved the students’ overall writing.

A second study (O’Byrne & Murrell, 2014) that investigated how feedback enticed students to compose was conducted on 51 Grade 11 students in West Virginia. Although this study was conducted at the high school level, the results from this study can be extrapolated to an intermediate classroom in terms of the effectiveness of peer feedback for enticing composition. The results from O’Byrne and Murrell’s (2014)

qualitative case study further emphasized that timely feedback, as well as instructor direction, assisted in the completion of blogging. Furthermore, the commenting, which included questioning, elaboration, and information-sharing, supported learning by extending and challenging thinking. O'Byrne and Murrell divided the feedback into two categories: reflective thought which stimulated critical thinking and elaboration; and positive learning environment which was characterized by engagement and collaboration. Thus, this blogging activity included the 21st century skills of higher order thinking skills and collaboration. The interactive nature of blogging helps foster a *community of practice* where by people respond, ask questions, and learn from one another (Yang, 2009).

A case study of blog-based learning in Korea (Kang et al., 2011) further emphasized that a community of practice is achieved through peer feedback and blogging. Kang et al. (2011) found that blog discussions featured interactivity among the participants. Furthermore, their study showed how a *decentralized* learning relationship can exist between students and teachers whereby the teacher facilitates student learning instead of dictating to students. The data for Kang et al.'s study consisted of researcher observations and the blog posts of the participant students. Similar to the previous study, the participants in Kang et al.'s study were not elementary-aged students; instead, they were graduate students. Despite this age discrepancy, the results from their study can still be considered for intermediate-aged children because elementary students can also respond to peer feedback.

According Kang et al.'s research, the multi-dimensional and multi-layered interactivity occurs through the technological aspects of a blog. More specifically,

participants are able to connect or link with one another thanks to the *trackback* feature of blogs (Furukawa, Matsuo, Matsuzawa, Takeda, & Uchiyama, 2006). The trackback allows enables participants to comment on other participants' postings, leave their opinion, link posts to their blogs, and create their own conversation threads. What results is a "dense interconnectedness among blogs [which forms] a blog network" (Kang et al., 2011, p. 228) where the participants can learn from each other.

A learner-centered environment occurs when students are given the opportunity to blog because students have the freedom to write and comment about what they want. Unlike traditional learning environments where the teacher has the power and control, a blog allows the students more freedom to control their writing. In fact, a community of practice occurs when the students and teachers are co-learners with equal participation in the online activities. Teachers and students also both have equal access to and sharing of information. When teachers develop pedagogically sound blogging activities, students benefit because they have more control or ownership over their learning and are made more accountable. In summary, blogs can "nudge students interests and participation into learning by providing meaningful learning pursuits, a sense of interactivity, and a collaborative learning community" (Kang et al., 2011, p. 229). As the previous studies showed, peer feedback motivates students to blog and thus write. Motivation is the focus of the next section.

Motivation

As Calkins (1994) states, empowering students with choice of content, purpose, and audience enhances their desire to write. Several studies (e.g., Allaire, Theriault, Gagnon, & Lalancette, 2013; Deng & Yuen, 2012) highlight how technology increased

student motivation to write. As previously mentioned, a participatory culture is paramount to successful blog implementation.

In a recent case study, Allaire et al. (2013) undertook a qualitative analysis to see if a blog could motivate Grade 6 students to write in Quebec. The study involved two Grade 6 classes over the course of an entire school year. Students in one class had the option to use a blog while students in the second class were mandated to blog. Allaire et al. grounded their research in the affective, cognitive, and social dimensions of learning environments. More specifically, they considered the learner-, knowledge-, assessment-, and community-centered elements of learning environments (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). Allaire et al. assert that the learner-centred environment focuses on knowledge, skills, attitudes, affects, and beliefs that learners possess. The knowledge-centred environment helps students become knowledgeable by providing situations that lead to better understanding and eventual knowledge transfer. An assessment-centred environment provides feedback and revision opportunities. Finally, a community-centred environment enhances social norms and interactions that help students learn from their mistakes. Allaire et al. assert that blogs provide students the opportunity to participate in the aforementioned environments. That is, blogs provide the learner-centred environment in the affective variables of students, namely self-concept, motivation, and relationship to writing; the knowledge-centred environment in the content written by the students; and the community-centred attribute in a blog's affordance to receive comments from people other than the teacher.

The results of Allaire et al.'s (2013) study were interesting because they displayed that the feedback was not as big a motivator to write as was the aspect of choice in

subject matter. These results relate to Calkins' (1994) views about the importance of giving students a choice in content and audience. Thus, when students are afforded the freedom to choose what they want to write about on blogs, they will be more motivated or inclined to write.

Similar to Allaire et al.'s (2013) study, Deng and Yuen (2012) sought to gain a better understanding of student perceptions towards blogging and the factors that motivated students to voluntarily write academic blogs. The pedagogical design of blogging activities can influence the degree of student engagement as well as blog style and content. As in a previously mentioned study (Kang et al., 2011), Deng and Yuen's study investigated university-aged students; nevertheless, their results can be applied to elementary-aged students because blogs can motivate younger students to write. Deng and Yuen followed an exploratory qualitative approach and used questionnaires, interviews, and blog comments in their study. Their research revealed that motivation was dependent on student perceptions related to the individual, social, and academic dimensions of blogs. The individual dimension concerned the articulation of thoughts or reflection. The social dimension focused on how the students' desire to share thoughts and feelings as a motivating feature to blog. Several students commented on how communicating with their peers helped foster a nurturing social environment. An interesting observation in Deng and Yuen's study in terms of the social dimension was that students rarely used the blogs to seek help or ask questions. The academic dimension of blogging in Deng and Yuen's study related to the instructor's role in the design efforts to engage students in academic blogging. In this case, the instructors encouraged the students to use the blogs for both reflection and sharing. The results of the

study showed that the students greatly appreciated the instructor's posts. More specifically, 92% of the students in Class A and 74% in Class B stated that they valued the instructor's encouragement and feedback (Deng & Yeun, 2012, p. 58).

Overall, Deng and Yeun (2012) concluded that a number of factors motivate students to partake in academic blogs. The level of motivation among participants depended on the degree to which students valued individual features, such as expressing feelings or documenting experiences, social features, such as keeping others updated, seeking help, or reassuring classmates, and academic features, such as teacher feedback and encouragement. Thus, the pedagogical design of blogging activities have to be such that it encourages all of the aforementioned features. In addition to providing a motivating medium for students, blogs also offer students the opportunity to reflect on their thinking. The following section will investigate how blogs encourage student reflection.

Reflection

The structure of a weblog affords students the ability to reflect on their previous posts. Because blog entries are structured in reverse chronological order, students are able to reflect on their learning and growth as an individual. A number of studies (Mohamad, Tasir, Harun, & Shukor, 2013; Xie, Ke, & Sharma, 2008; Yang, 2009) explored how blogs could be used by students as a metacognitive venue to analyze or reflect on their thinking and learning. Although the participants in these studies were adults, the results from the research can be applied to school-aged children. When students think about or reflect on their learning, they can question and evaluate concepts which results in a deeper understanding. Xei et al. (2008) sum up this idea by stating that

“when students pause and become readers of their own writing, they have another chance [to] speculate on these ideas and test their viability according to their existing schema” (p. 23). Thus, metacognitive awareness can occur when students blog.

Yang’s (2009) study was one that emphasized how a blog was a useful platform for reflecting and communicating. Yang employed qualitative measures such as student postings and comments, surveys, conversations to assess reflective experiences. In this study, reflection ranged from cursory, descriptive reflection to a more critical reflection that could potentially change beliefs in teaching practice (Korthagen, 1993; Sockman & Sharma, 2008). Nearly two-thirds of the 43 student participants felt that blogs were a useful platform for reflecting and communicating about their learning and teaching (Yang, 2009, p. 17). They felt more comfortable posting comments than having face-to-face conversations because they could be more critical. They also appreciated that they could view previous blog posts to see how their thinking transformed over time.

A further research study (Xie et al., 2008) that sought to examine the reflective nature of blogs was a longitudinal empirical study that examined how 44 first-year university students used a blog over a semester. One of the guiding questions in this study asked if weblogging over time would reinforce participants’ reflective thinking. Although the study did not show an increase in reflective thinking due to peer feedback, it did prove that if students continued to blog over the course of the semester, they became more reflective over time. In addition, a positive correlation occurred between the participants’ reflective thinking level and their course grades. Thus, reflective thinking assists cognitive development.

Although students appreciate the benefits of the interactive nature of blogs, namely that they actively share ideas, experiences, and perspectives, instructor comments on student blogs are sometimes necessary to stimulate reflective thinking (Mohamad, Tasir, Harun, & Shukor, 2013). Mohamad et al. (2013) discovered that students encountered moderate difficulty independently achieving deeper reflective thought. The results of their study showed that *metacognitive scaffolding* provided by the instructors helped trigger students' reflection and patterns of reflection. The metacognitive scaffolding offered by tutors included supporting the reflective writing of the students by monitoring the learning process, asking questions to activate learning, and supervising text comprehension. The result of this metacognitive scaffolding was it elicited student thinking and reflection. The students appreciated the benefits of this scaffolding as more than half students involved in the study believed that blogging helped "them to move from surface to a deeper level of learning and critical thinking" (Mohamad et al., 2013, p. 363). The structure of blogs themselves allow for such reflection. E-portfolios also enable such reflective practices. Chapter Two concludes with a brief discussion around how blogs are used for e-portfolios, personal information management systems, and multimodal representation.

E-portfolios

Weblogs offer a medium for students to showcase their work and learn from their accomplishments. The type of portfolio that encourages reflective practice is known a *process portfolio*. A process portfolio is "student-centred [and] focuses on students' progress and supports an environment of goal-setting, feedback, reflection and self-evaluation" (Nicolaidou, 2013, p. 405). Such an environment allows the development of

21st century competencies (Canadians for 21st Century Learning and Innovation, 2012) of participation and collaboration as students offer feedback, learn from each other, and reflect on their conceptual understanding. By using a weblog as the tool for e-portfolios, students' work can be instantly exposed to a larger audience. Thus, they can receive immediate feedback from others. Furthermore, students may be more motivated to work on their portfolios because of the technological aspect. Although studies have been undertaken to investigate if eportfolios can enhance student writing performance (Meyer, Abrami, Wade, Aslan, & Deault, 2010), little research exists that show how blogs can be used as a platform for e-portfolios.

Seeing that a gap existed in the research, Nicolaidou (2013) embarked on a study to see if e-portfolios, via weblogs, could be used to support primary students' writing performance and peer feedback. More specifically, Nicolaidou conducted a study in a Grade 4 class in Cyprus to see if writing skills and the effectiveness of peer feedback would improve over the course of a year. Nicolaidou's data, which included 176 student-essays and 1306 peer feedback posts, was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition to these artifacts, interviews, and a pre- and post- test on writing performance were also analyzed. For Nicolaidou's study, the components that comprised the writing test included the ability of students to write a structured, well-organized essay that developed their ideas in paragraphs with few conventional errors. The post-test indicated that definite gains were achieved by students on their writing performance.

Nicolaidou's research also showed that because a web-based e-portfolio was an avenue that encourages input from others, students' peer feedback skills improved over time. More specifically, the research indicated that students became better at reviewing

their peers' work and offering constructive suggestions to improve the writing. In addition, students were more inclined to fix their mistakes after receiving the peer feedback. The fact that throughout the course of the study students were given digital citizenship lessons and strategies on how to tactfully give and receive feedback may have led to the improvement with peer feedback. In addition to providing a medium for e-portfolios, blogs also give students increased autonomy by allowing them to control what they put on their blogs. This idea of student autonomy with blogs will now be discussed as blogs can be used as a personal information management system.

Personal Information Management (PIM)

Similar to Nicolaidou's study which displayed that increased student autonomy can occur with blogging, Yeo and Lee (2014) explored the idea of student ownership and self-efficacy when they embarked on a study to see if blogs could be used for personal information management. More specifically, they wanted to see if using blogs to manage data would personalize one's learning space and thus, lead to self-autonomy and motivation. Cognitive processes for learning are fostered when blogs are used for PIM because learners are required to name, locate, classify, organize, and categorize information. Students also chose the blogs' content, layout, and multimodal aspects. Yeo and Lee (2014) studied how 63 Grade 4 students in Korea used blogs for PIM. They used an experiment and control group method and student perception surveys in their analysis of students' use of blogs for PIM. They concluded that students in the experimental group collected more resources, and made more postings than the control group. Furthermore, students in the experiment group believed that blogs helped them in their studies because it was more meaningful due to the fact they could keep track of their

learning. In addition, students enjoyed the fact they could personalize their blogs and make it their own. Students also said that they enjoyed the peer interaction afforded with the blog comments made by others.

Yeo and Lee's (2014) study shows that intermediate-aged students can use blogs for more than posting assignments and reflections or commenting on their peers' work, and can be used to manage, store, and retrieve information. Because the students decide what they will include on their blogs, they are more engaged learners and thus, experience enhanced self-efficacy. Furthermore, because blogs allow for multimodal representation, self-efficacy and autonomy are further increased. Multimodal representation will now be highlighted.

Multimodality

Not unlike the previous studies (Nicolaidou, 2013; Yeo & Lee, 2014), O'Byrne and Murrell (2014) also focused on student autonomy when students use the multimodal tools afforded by blogs. Multimodal tools are more than simple, written text as they include sound, music, still and moving images (Brusilovsky, 2001). Blogs permit students to embark on more than just print text-based correspondence because many blog hosting sites have features that enable students to include these multimodal tools (O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014). The inclusion of these multimodal facets help facilitate and refine ideas and thinking, as well as help extend communication and participation of the students. O'Byrne & Murrell (2014) embarked on a study that went beyond an analysis of the text-based aspects of blogs; instead, they wanted to analyze "students' awareness and use of the digital affordances of blogs to participate, communicate, and interact" (p. 928). The researchers were looking to see if students included any of the following

multimodal aspects and/or interactive features: pictures, videos, clips, music, links, surveys, or playlists. Because 67% of the 51 analyzed blogs included photos, eighteen percent embedded audio, and 41% contained video, their results emphasized that students appreciate the multimodal tools that enable them to construct and communicate information (O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014, p. 936). Thus, the studies (Nicolaidou, 2013; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014; Yeo & Lee, 2014) reveal that blogs provide students with autonomy and a variety of ways to represent or express their thinking.

Conclusion

The research studies mentioned above demonstrate the benefits of incorporating blogs into elementary classrooms. First and foremost, blogs give students the opportunity to write freely, respond to others work, and learn from one another. These features result in a collaborative or community-like atmosphere whereby students are motivated to write and share ideas. Increased motivation also occurs because students are writing for a wider audience than just their teacher. Because students are given choice in their blogs content and format, they have a greater sense of autonomy, which is another motivating factor. In the end, students experience improved writing skills due to the choice involved with blogging, peer feedback, and growing sense of ownership with their work. Chapter Three will now present a guide for the best practices for implementing blogs at the intermediate level. These practices, as my MEd project, will inform my own use of classroom blogging, and are meant to support other teachers' implementation of blogging in their own classrooms.

Chapter 3

A Guide for Implementing an Intermediate Blog Program

In this chapter, I present a guide that teachers can use to implement a blog into their intermediate (Grades 3-5) classrooms. The sections in this chapter include references to both my theoretical frameworks and literature review which revealed the affordances and challenges of an intermediate classroom blog, as well as to my guiding questions which were: 1) How can students' classroom-based blogging be realized and supported at the elementary level? and 2) What are the best practices for implementing classroom blogs? This guide explains factors and processes that teachers should consider as they embark on implementing a blog for the very first time in their classroom. The guide begins with general information about how blogging is tied to BC's new English Language Arts curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2013) and is part of BC's Digital Literacy Framework (n.d.). After this curricular overview, cyber safety and digital citizenship are outlined as students must be aware of these topics before producing work in an online environment. Next, the project provides information about blog platforms, blog criteria and assessment, and blog exemplars and scaffolded learning. These topics are explored before students begin writing online. Following these pre-blogging topics is an explanation of digital writing instruction and blogging ideas, and peer feedback instruction. Chapter Three ends with an annotated bibliography of teacher-friendly blogging resources as well as some implications for the future of elementary classroom blogging. After reading this chapter, teachers new to blogging will have a better understanding of what they should consider, or do, in order to successfully implement student blogs into their classroom practice.

Curricular Connections and Digital Literacies

Teachers new to blogging can see that a number of goals in British Columbia's new English Language Arts curriculum (2013) can directly relate to a blog program. These goals include giving students the opportunity to:

- engage in the study of language and literature and develop a set of language and thinking skills, including how to construct meaning, think creatively and critically, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize
- develop literacy in its broadest sense, including the ability to access, understand, process and effectively use oral, written, digital, and multimedia forms of communication for a range of purposes and audiences
- sustain a lifelong sense of curiosity, a passion for reading and learning, and an appreciation of the power and beauty of language and literature
- develop a deep understanding of language and literacy concepts and how these may be used to accomplish personal, social, and academic goals and provide fulfilment (BC Ministry of Education, 2013, Goals and Rationale section, para. 7).

Furthermore, a well-designed blog program encompasses the communication, thinking, personal and social competencies outlined in the new curriculum. These core competencies assist students in engaging in deeper, life-long learning.

In addition to this new curriculum, The British Columbia Ministry of Education also developed a Digital Literacy Framework (n.d.) that teachers may use to help them develop their blogging program. The definition of digital literacy is “the interest, attitude, and ability of individuals to use digital technology and communication tools appropriately to access, manage, integrate, analyze and evaluate information, construct

new knowledge, and create and communicate with others” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d., p. 1). This Digital Literacy Framework is divided into six sections: Research and Information Literacy; Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making; Creativity and Innovation; Digital Citizenship; Communication and Collaboration; and Technology Operations and Concepts. Similar to achieving the goals set forth in the new curriculum, a well-designed blog program adheres to the aforementioned components of the digital literacy framework. In other words, because students are creating or producing in an online environment, they must be taught to think critically about how and what they will post as well as how they will respond to others. Before such production can occur, permission to blog must be granted.

Permission

Administrative approval needs to be granted before proceeding with a blogging program. Once this approval is given, teachers need parental permission. Although most schools have established internet policies where both students and parents sign forms agreeing to the guidelines, another form specific to blogging should go home to explain the program. A letter should include the safety measures undertaken with the blogging program as well as the purpose of blogs to develop writing and communication skills in the 21st century. Preparing parents in advance of implementing a blogging program may alleviate problems or concerns before the program is up and running. In Appendix A, I provide an example of a permission letter that could be sent home to parents.

Once administrative and parental approval is granted, a considerable amount of preparation must occur before students can begin composing their own blogs. Although most of the students that I teach have access to computers and use them on a regular basis

at home or in school, they have had little formal instruction about cyber safety and digital citizenship. In my opinion, facilitating cyber safety and digital citizenship lessons must be the next step for teachers before online student composition occurs.

Cyber Safety

Before students begin blogging, teachers need to ensure that their students know how to use the internet in a safe and respectful manner. Unfortunately, many of the students who use the internet outside of school receive little, if any, direction as to how to use it in a safe, responsible manner (Richardson, 2010). Therefore, direct guidance from teachers is often the only instruction many youth receive about cyber safety, digital citizenship, and the responsible use of technology.

Richardson (2010) states that “one of the most difficult roads to navigate in the world of the Read/Write Web is how to balance the safety of the child with the benefits that come with students taking ownership of the work they publish online” (p. 14). An important safety rule for elementary-aged bloggers is that they must never post personal information such as their full name, address, or phone number. In addition, students must be aware that anything they post online is ‘out there’ in cyberspace and can be accessed by virtually anyone. Furthermore, students need to know that people may not be who they say they are online. For these reasons, students need to know what should and should not be posted online in an effort to keep them safe. They also need to know what they should do, namely tell an adult, if they do encounter inappropriate content or responses to their blogs. Teachers can avoid the potential problems of an outside public audience by setting up the blog so that only class members can participate.



Figure 1: Privacy Pirates (<http://mediasmarts.ca>). Permission granted to use this picture.

Two educational media programs (Common Sense Media™, 2012; MediaSmarts™, 2012) offer multiple lessons on cyber safety in a fun, and interactive way. MediaSmarts™ (2012) is a Canadian site whose goal

is to develop and deliver media literacy resources so that children have the skills needed to become informed, digital citizens. Two games that were particularly helpful on this site were *Privacy Pirates: An Interactive Guide on Online Privacy* and *Privacy Playground: The First Adventure of the Three Cyber Pigs*.

Similarly, Common Sense Media™ (2012) offers educators lessons “to help students harness technology for learning and life” (Our Mission section, para. 4). The ‘Digital Passport’ section on the Common Sense Media™ site is specifically aimed at children in Grades 3 to 5. It offers interactive games and videos to help teach students how to make safe, smart ethical choices in the digital world. Both sites are easy to navigate and the lessons are clearly presented in a teacher-friendly way. Thus, both sites would assist teachers just embarking on teaching with technology. After engaging these cyber safety lessons, students should learn about digital citizenship.

Digital Citizenship and Etiquette

Digital citizenship instruction focuses on teaching students specific, online social skills. As mentioned previously, digital citizenship is emphasized in BC's Digital Literacy Framework. Two specific outcomes of digital citizenship education are to have students practice respectful and tolerant behaviours towards others and to increase civic engagement activities (Jones & Mitchell, 2015). Teachers should not assume that all students know how to politely engage with others while online. Instead, students should appreciate that they must treat others in a respectful, tolerant manner even when their perspectives and opinions differ from others. I would suggest to my students that they should not write anything online that they would not be able to say to someone's face. Because students are made more aware of respectful online behaviour, or *netiquette*, and tolerance for varying viewpoints, instances of cyber bullying and online harassment may potentially decrease. Thus, digital citizenship education could be considered a proactive measure for potential online problems.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, exploratory talk (Mercer, Wegerif, & Dawes, 1999) lessons could be employed to encourage digital citizenship. A set of blogging ground



Figure 2. All Digital Citizens Poster (<https://www.common sensemedia.org>)



Figure 3. Image from Digital Passport Privacy Video (www.digitalpassport.org/educator/material)

rules could include the following points:

1. Discuss things together. As a blogger you should ask for opinions, ask for reasons why, and listen to people.
2. Be prepared to change your mind.
3. Think before you write.
4. Respect others' ideas and viewpoints—do not just state your own.
5. Share all the ideas and information you have.
6. Make sure everyone is content after the exchanges are complete (Mercer et al., 1999, p. 100).

When these ground rules are explicitly taught, students should know what is expected when they begin blogging. The next section will highlight some of the blog platforms that may be used in intermediate classrooms.

Blog Platforms

A variety of blog platforms are available for teachers to use when implementing a classroom blogging program. Current blog platforms that are used in educational settings include *Edublog*[™], *Class Blogmeister*[™], *ThinkQuest*[™], and *Ning*[™] (Hicks, 2009). *YouTube*[™] offers a number of tutorials that model how to use the various blogging platforms. Teachers should also investigate the various platforms themselves so that they can select which one will best accommodate their students' learning needs.

Some teachers may have their own district blog platforms. Such platforms have been implemented because district principals and/or superintendents are concerned about the legality of posting student work to American servers due to British Columbia's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (Office of the Information and

Policy Commissioner for British Columbia, 2012). By setting up their own blog platforms on district servers, teachers are not contravening the aforementioned law as student work is posted on a Canadian server instead of an American one. District support of new technologies can thus make implementation of classroom blogs less cumbersome.

As I am developing my blogging experience, and do not use my district's blog platform, I am presently preparing *Kidblog*TM as my blogging platform. This blogging site is a secure, user-friendly, and age-appropriate platform.

*Kidblog*TM is also easy to set up and it is simple for teachers to monitor their students' blog entries and comments. Content does not go public until it receives the teacher's approval thus preventing the

distribution of disrespectful or inappropriate content both in outgoing posts and incoming comments. Teachers can sign up to *Kidblog*TM for free for the basic membership or pay a minimal fee for the premium package. The premium membership allows students to personalize their blogs with different themes and colours, to easily integrate with Google DriveTM, and to upload larger media files. For these reasons, I have chosen to pay for the *Kidblog*TM upgrade in my own classroom. Once teachers have selected a blog platform, they can show students examples of high quality blogs and how to create such exemplary blogs.

Blog Exemplars and Scaffolded Learning

Once teachers have chosen a blog platform and supported their students' knowledge of cyber safety and digital citizenship, they can show their students an array

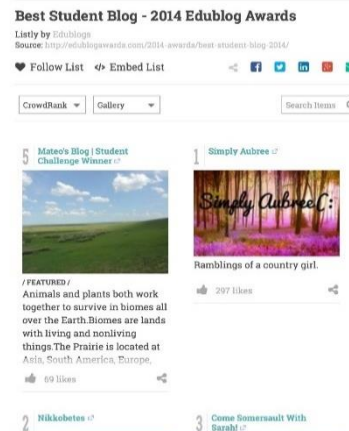


Figure 4. Best Student Blog
(<http://edublogawards.com>)

of high-caliber blogs produced by elementary students. One such site is *The Edublog Awards* (2004) website as it “celebrate[s] the best of the web in education” (Title Page). *Class Blogs Shed: The Literacy Shed* is another website that could be used to view blog exemplars. These student-produced blogs illustrate to students what is possible when one creates a blog. A wide variety of student blogs appear on these sites so students are able to compare blogs and see elements that they may want to include in their own blogs. Some blogs include only text while others are multimodal in nature as they include text, pictures, videos, audio clip or sound effects. It is important to discuss the various features and compositional approaches with students. The exemplars and classroom discussion offer a scaffold or model for student learning. Using exemplars lends itself to the *gradual release of responsibility* (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) and is supported by social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) whereby students see models of work that they can attempt to achieve and work together while teachers guide them through their own blog creations.

Once students have viewed and discussed a number of blog exemplars, teachers can model the blogging process in front of their students. Teachers who are less digitally-inclined, or are concerned about technical problems during teaching, can model the set up using paper. That is, they may explain to, and show their students how, to compose a blog post while using a document camera and paper. Appendix B offers an example of a paper blog template. Teachers who are more comfortable with technology can model how to blog directly on the computer. This modeling (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), be it on paper or computer, shows students how to thoughtfully complete a blog post for their intended audience. As mentioned in chapter two, a blog communication is

a transaction (Rosenblatt, 1994) between the writer and reader, so the writing is not individualistic. Once students have a better idea of what an effective blog looks like and how to thoughtfully compose a blog entry, teachers can discuss blog criteria and assessment with their students.

Blog Criteria and Assessment

After students have viewed blog exemplars and know the expectations for digitally communicating, students need to have clear criteria for the blog itself. That is, they need to know what and how they will be assessed. Rubrics are one way for students to see the blog's criteria. Appendix C includes blogging rubrics. Criteria may include overall blog use which considers the number of entries that are made; personal responses which focuses on compliments, connections, and questions; and writing traits which reflect ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions. As with other assignments, students should know the learning intentions and criteria before they begin. Once students have posted a number of blog entries and have had practice blogging, they could choose an entry for evaluation.

Assessment is ongoing when students participate in a blogging program. Such assessment, known as *formative assessment* (Drake, Reid, & Kolohon, 2014), is made possible through the peer feedback feature of blogs. This feedback enhances learning (Chen et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2011; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014) as the feedback focuses on student strengths, areas of confusion, and next steps for growth; thus, formative assessment is more personalized because it focuses on the individual student without comparing him/her to other students in the class. An underlying philosophy of formative assessment is that all students can learn and that it is the teacher's responsibility to

actively support student learning and literacy development. Students must of course receive instruction in Digital writing.

Digital Writing Instruction

Because using social media such as having a blogging program in the classroom may be new to intermediate-aged students, they will need guidance with their writing. Blogging just for the sake of publishing online has little academic value; thus, teachers should emphasize that the purpose of a blog program in the classroom is to improve communication and writing skills in an authentic manner. As mentioned in Chapter Two, blogging may be viewed as a 21st century method of extending Calkins' (1994) writing workshop (Hicks, 2009). Thus, teachers should present mini-lessons before students' composition begins each day; students will have time to compose on the computer; student peer conferences and share sessions will occur once an entry is posted and feedback is received. One feature that teachers should remember when implementing blogs is that student choice is vital to a successful program. As the research (Allaire et al., 2013; Deng & Yuen, 2012) demonstrates, student choice in form, content, and genre is a motivating feature for student composition.

When embarking on digital writing with blogs, teachers may use the *MAPS* heuristic (Hicks, 2009) to assist student composition. According to Hicks, the acronym stands for *mode, media, audience, purpose, and situation*. He describes each feature as follows:

- mode: the genre of the text
- media: the way in which the text is presented
- audience: the characteristics of those how are likely to view the work

-purpose: the specific aim that the writer wishes to accomplish

-situation for the writer: a writer's strengths, comfort zone, and writing preferences

-situation of the writing: the demands of the writing task (Hicks, 2009, p. 57).

Because blogging affords student choice in terms of form, content, and multimedia aspects (O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014), students should be aware of the aforementioned aspects before they begin posting. Appendix D is an example of a student's blog post and the accompanying comments. In the following section I discuss the use of prompts, Eportfolios and reader response for blogging.

Blog Ideas

There are a variety of ways to get students writing their blog entries. Richardson (2009) states that teachers could suggest that students post:

- their reactions to thought-provoking questions,
- their reactions to photos,
- journal entries,
- results of surveys they complete in various units,
- their ideas and opinions about topics discussed in class,
- class writing assignments,
- their opinions on various topics,
- comments, opinions, or questions on daily news items or issues of interest,
- activities they accomplished in class and give their opinions on them,



Figure 5. Student Blogging,
by K. Leakey, 2015.

- new vocabulary,
- their best writing pieces (p. 40).

These ideas extend the writing workshop (Calkins, 1994) to a digital medium.

Furthermore, this digital platforms allows students to review, reflect, and potentially modify their writing.

E-portfolios. Blogs may also be used for e-portfolios (Nicolaidou, 2013). E-portfolios are beneficial because they offer an easily-accessible, ongoing account of a student's work. An e-portfolio can elicit higher order thinking skills if bloggers are required to review their previous posts, reflect upon them, synthesize their thinking, and potentially gain new understandings. The archived nature of blogs makes it easy for students to re-visit their previous posts.

HOT Blogging. Another approach for implementing blogs is the literature response HOT blogging framework (Zawilinski, 2009) which promotes higher order thinking skills. The HOT blogging framework consists of the following steps:

- Bolster the background
- Prime the pump
- Continue the conversation
- Make multiplicity explicit.

Each step integrates traditional reading comprehension skills with higher order thinking skills. Students can question text, think critically about the author's message, share diverse perspectives and exchange ideas which contribute to a collaborative learning community. During the 'Bolster the Background' stage, teachers post activities and questions to build background or prior knowledge. The 'Prime the Pump' stage has

students connect their prior knowledge (Piaget, 1952) to new text. They also state their initial impressions of the text. Students are encouraged to post about

- Confusions that may need to be clarified
- First impressions of the characters or storyline
- A summary of what has been learned so far
- Connections to themselves, other texts, or the world (Zawilinski, 2009, p. 657)

When students ‘Continue the Conversation’, they begin to summarize and synthesize the text with all the posts. The final step, ‘Make Multiplicity Explicit’, has students amalgamate their knowledge together with supporting evidence and clear explanation.

When teachers use the HOT blogging framework, they are further revealing the reading-writing connection (Rosenblatt, 1978) because students are required to read both literature and blog posts, and then write about them. Because a blog is a two-way conversation between the reader and writer, students need to have had the previously mentioned digital citizenship lessons so that they know how to tactfully respond to their peers.

Peer Feedback Instruction

In addition to online etiquette and general writing instruction, intermediate students will need direction about how to offer constructive, meaningful feedback. As the research (Chen et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2011; O’Byrne & Murrell, 2014) indicates, peer feedback is an integral component to a successful blogging program so that an online written conversation can occur. Teachers could show their students a video (Yollis, 2010) to teach them how to write quality blog comments. The following features are outlined in the video:

1. Compliment the writer in a specific way.
2. Add new information.
3. Make a connection.
4. End with a question.
5. Proofread your comment.

These tips could be made into a poster and placed in the computer lab so that students can quickly refer to them while they are writing.



Figure 6. Image from How to Write a Quality Comment (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDVSw54VU1A>)

Teachers could further discuss how employing these tips help students make comments of substance or “dollar comments” as opposed to superficial comments or “penny comments” (Parisi & Crosby, 2012) which do not extend the conversation.

Another technique teachers may use to help students with peer responses is the *Bless, Address, and Press* (National Writing Project, 2008) approach to feedback. In this approach, the blogger lets the readers know which kind of feedback he/she wishes to receive. Bloggers may ask for blessed feedback when they are not ready for a full blown critique of their work; when the writing is not polished and more reflective in nature; or when the writing is just for fun. Addressed feedback may be requested when bloggers want specific feedback on areas of concern, or when they want ideas about how to proceed with their next posting. Pressed feedback may be requested on strong pieces of writing or when the bloggers wants constructive criticism about their work. Bloggers have more control over the feedback they will receive when they explicitly let the reader know what type of feedback they want.

Teachers play an instrumental role in providing students with the feedback (O’Byrne & Murrell, 2014) necessary to improve their writing skills. In the initial stages of blog implementation, the quicker the teacher responds to the students the better. Such feedback follows Vygotsky’s *Zone of Proximal Development* (1978) which states that “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Once students receive the teacher's feedback, they can try to implement the teacher's suggestions which, in turn, could improve writing. Teachers also need ongoing support for their practice. In the following section of the guide I discuss some very useful resources to support classroom blogging.

Recommended Blogging Resources

Although there is a paucity of research studies on the blogging of elementary students, a number of resources for blogging do exist. In my experience, three of the most practical books for helping teacher implement blogs into their classrooms are *The Digital Writing Workshop* (Hicks, 2009); *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for the Classroom* (Richardson, 2010); and *Making Connections With Blogging: Authentic Learning for Today's Classrooms* (Parisi, 2012). These resources focus on the student production of digital literacies and offer sensible approaches for teachers interested in implementing new literacies into their classrooms.

The Digital Writing Workshop. The first book I would recommend to teachers who are interested in implementing new literacies is *The Digital Writing Workshop* (Hicks, 2009) because it offers a variety of digital literacies that can be used in a school setting. Hicks emphasizes the craft of writing and follows the writing workshop approach (Calkins, 1994). As mentioned in Chapter Two, instead of simply emphasizing the technological aspect of digital writing, Hicks focuses on the student writer. After an introductory chapter which describes the theoretical background and educational

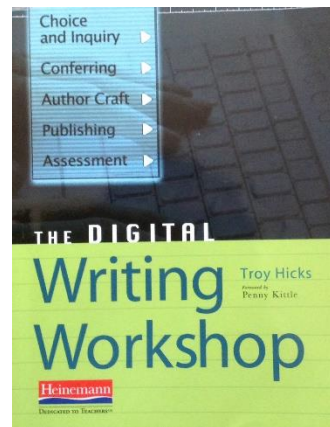


Figure 7. Book Cover of The Digital Writing Workshop

affordances of digital writing, Hicks includes chapters about fostering student choice and inquiry, conferring and active revision through digital media, examining authors' craft through multimedia composition, designing and publishing digital writing, and enabling assessment of both product and process. In addition to providing blog information, Hicks also includes ways that teachers can implement other forms of digital writing, namely, wikis, RSS, collaborative word processing, and social bookmarking. Hicks offers student examples and numerous websites that teachers can use for reference when developing a digital writing program.

Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms.

A second useful resource that teachers could use to help them incorporate blogs into their classrooms is *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms* (Richardson, 2010). Like Hicks



Figure 8. Book Cover of Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms

(2009), in addition to proposing the steps and practical uses for integrating blogs into their classroom, Richardson offers real-world, hands-on approaches for implementing wikis, RSS feeds, social bookmarking, online photo-galleries, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Richardson emphasizes how these tools help personalize and enhance learning so that students are better prepared for the future. Thus, teachers have a reference guide to help them expand their repertoire of new literacies.

Making Connections With Blogging: Authentic Learning for Today's

Classrooms. The last and most practical resource for intermediate teachers is *Making*

Connections With Blogging: Authentic Learning for Today's

Classrooms (Parisi & Crosby, 2012) because this resource

focuses solely on blog implementation. The overlying themes

presented in this resource are that blogging is not simply an

“add-on”, and that students must respect the fact that when

they blog, they are part of a larger, online community. Parisi

and Crosby (2012) offer information that teachers must

consider before they implement a blog platform such as curricular standards, changes in

pedagogy, cyber safety and digital citizenship. They then offer guidance on how to

choose an appropriate platform, set up a blog, and eventually manage one. The book

ends with specific information and strategies for implementing blogs across the content

areas as well as assessment ideas. If I would recommend any one book to teachers new

to blogging, it would be this one.

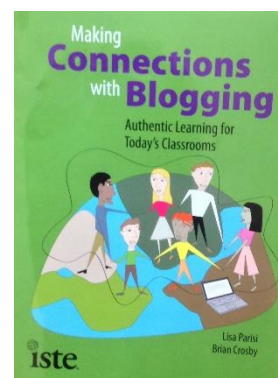


Figure 9. Book Cover of Making Connections with Blogging

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Upon completion of this project, it is very evident to me that more research is needed in relation to the outcomes of classroom blogging at the intermediate level. As previously mentioned, the majority of research related to school-aged children blogging occurs at the high school level (Boling, 2008). Unfortunately, a paucity of research still exists seven years after Boling first stated this fact. Because very little research has been conducted at the intermediate level, I drew from blogging research at the high school and university-level for this project. I then extrapolated these results to intermediate-aged children in terms of peer feedback (Kang et al., 2011; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014) and motivation to write (Deng & Yuen, 2012). Thus, more research studies should be undertaken that focus on intermediate-aged students' overall writing progress, their motivation to write online, and how online feedback - from both teachers and peers - assists literacy learning. In addition, research studies should be undertaken to investigate how blogging can impact metacognitive awareness in younger students as they can reflect on their previous entries due to the reverse chronological nature of blogs. E-portfolios are a medium that can also be used to promote this metacognitive awareness. Again, more research related to blogging at the intermediate level needs to occur to inform both students' learning and teachers' pedagogy.

As teachers begin to implement blogs into their classrooms, they will need support. Ideally, school districts will provide this support. Support for blog implementation could come in the form of in-service opportunities or educational technology co-ordinators. These mentor teachers could role model how to set up an effective blog program as well as provide guidance once students begin blogging.

Teachers may be more likely to delve into this new medium if they know that they will receive assistance when necessary and have their questions or concerns addressed in a timely fashion. Teachers can also read academic journals or go online to find out more information about blogging in elementary classrooms.

As has been demonstrated through the literature, teachers are helping to prepare their students for the 21st century when they implement a classroom blogging program. In addition, with careful design, blogs may improve writing and communication skills, and fostering a collaborative community. It has been my goal, throughout this Master of Education project, to help other educators understand that blogging at the intermediate level is not only possible but that it can become a reality through meaningful planning and guidance of best practices. It is my intention to not only practice blogging for academic purposes in my own classroom, but to also serve as a 'blogging ambassador' in my school community so that teachers and students can witness the many benefits of blogging.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Permission Letter for Parents

January 27, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I am hoping to begin a class blog with my class. A blog is an online environment that permits students to participate in journaling, voice their opinions, or contribute to classroom discussions on topics assigned by me. The purpose of this blog is to promote cooperative learning in a virtual space. It is also a great way to have students connect their reading and writing. Periodically, students will be asked to respond to a posting, which will be put on the blog by me. These postings relate to specific themes and issues that arise in the curriculum. At times, students will be allotted class time to complete these assignments, and some responses will be assigned for homework.

Given the nature of this learning activity, please be aware of the following:

- This class blog is protected...only students with permission can post messages.
- The blog will not be published on a public listing. This prevents anyone who has not been given permission from accessing the blog.
- The highest privacy standards for this site have been adhered to.
- Students are not allowed to share the web address for this blog with anyone except their parents/guardians.
- Comments will be reviewed before they are published.

On the blog site, I have posted the “ground rules”—the parameters which will help to ensure a safe and enriched learning environment. Should there be a breach in these ground rules at any point, this activity will cease. If you would like to visit the class blog, please ask your child for the address.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at the 250-123-4567.

Sincerely,

Krista

I give permission for my child, _____, to participate in a class blog.

Parent’s Signature

Date

Appendix B

Template for Paper Blog

_____’s Blog
Posts **Comments**

Monday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Tuesday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Wednesday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Thursday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Friday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Appendix C

Blog Rubric Samples

BLOG RUBRIC

	+2 MEETS	+1 DEVELOPING	+0 BEGINNING
Spelling and Grammar	The post is easy to read and there are very few spelling and grammar mistakes.	The post is easy to read but there are some spelling and grammar mistakes.	The post is not easy to read because there are so many grammar and spelling mistakes.
Original Content	The post is 90% - 100% in the author's own words. Almost all of the post is original content and not taken from other people.	The post is more than 50% in the author's own words. Most of the post is original content and not taken from other people.	Less than 50% of the post is in the author's own words. Most of the post is taken from other people.
Giving Credit	All sources are cited.	There is one or two citations, but it is clear that more were used.	No credit is given for content that was taken from other people.
Communicating and Knowledge	The writing/screencast/podcast shows a deep understanding of the topic. Thoughts and opinions are explained very well.	The writing/screencast/podcast shows some understanding of the topic. Thoughts and opinions are explained.	The writing/screencast/podcast does not show much understanding of the topic. Thoughts and opinions are mostly not explained.
Voice	The writing/screencast/podcast is interesting and creative. The title really grabs the reader's attention too.	The writing/screencast/podcast is somewhat interesting but it's too short.	The blog posts are too short and do not connect with the reader.
Invitations	You invite discussion for your blog post by asking thoughtful, specific questions.	You invite discussion for your blog post by asking a rhetorical question such as, "Don't you think this is the best?"	You do not invite discussion for your blog post because you don't ask people to comment.
Total:			

Assessed by: _____

Date: _____

(candidlessons.blogspot.ca)

	1 Beginner	2 Capable	3 Accomplished	4 Expert
Quality of Writing X 2	- post has no style or voice - gives no new information on the topic - poorly organized	- post has little style or voice - gives some new information on the topic - poorly organized	- written in a somewhat interesting style and voice - some new information on the topic or reflective - well organized	- written in an interesting style and voice - very informative or deeply reflective - well organized
Presentation X 1	- many words misspelled - many grammar errors - formatting makes post difficult to follow or read	- several spelling errors - several grammar errors - formatting makes it difficult to follow or read	- few spelling errors - few grammar errors - some formatting to help make the post easier to read	- all words spelled correctly - no grammar errors - formatting makes the post more interesting and easier to read
Multimedia X 2	- no multimedia	- one piece of multimedia	- several pieces of multimedia	- multiple pieces of multimedia - multimedia adds new information or perspective to post
Community X 1	- no links - post is not tagged or categorized	- one or more links - only "easy" links - post may be categorized or tagged	- several links included that add to the reader's understanding - post may be categorized or tagged	- several links to places that add to readers understanding - post is fully categorized and tagged

(www.evenfromhere.org/2010/02/16/blogging-rubric/)

Appendix D

Student Blog Sample

Division 6 2014-15
My Classes
Control Panel
Mrs. Leakey
Log Out



Ruby's Blog of Wonder

[All Blogs](#)
[My Blog](#)
[Ruby's Blog of Wonder](#)
[New Post](#)

The Fun Fair

Categories: [Blog](#)
June 1, 2015 @ 9:04 AM [2 Comments](#) [Edit this Post](#)

Our school has a fun fair every year. It's really fun. This year we are going to have a hamster ball I have never been in one before. people say its really fun so I cant wait to try it. There is also a dunk tank and the are bouncy castles and there are lots of cake walks and there is a food and drinks there to. and there is way more games to. But my favorite game is the bag game. you give the person a ticket and then you like draw a number and then you get a bag I am not sure that's how it works though. But last year I got a bag of feathers then I went again and I got a bag of raisins so it was not to exciting.

[Leave a comment](#)

My dog Finley

Categories: [Blog](#)



Rss Feed

search

Ruby's Blog of Wonder's Tags

Ruby's Blog of Wonder's Categories

• *No categories* - [Manage Categories](#)

Comments on My Posts



Oh boy a hamster wheel I love hamster wheel so much fun
by Matthew on "The Fun Fair"



Hopefully, you'll have better luck with your prizes this year. I love Lakewood's fun fair. My favourite part is the...
by Mrs. Leakey on "The Fun Fair"



I think Finley is one of the biggest dogs I've ever seen!
He's a good dog!! Great

Appendix E

Copyright Permission Letters

Hi Krista,

Thank you for contacting us and I am delighted to learn that you are finding our website resources of value. You are most welcome to use a screen shot of Privacy Pirates; all we ask is that you include a reference to it being a MediaSmarts' game by either including our logo or just our name in text.

Regards,

Lynn Huxtable
Director, Corporate Affairs
MediaSmarts / HabiloMédias
Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy
950 Gladstone Ave. Suite 120
Ottawa, ON, K1Y 3E6

T: 613-224-7721 ext. 225, or
1-800-896-3342

lhuxtable@mediasmarts.ca

Appendix F

PowerPoint Slides

Classroom Blogging With Intermediate Student By Krista Leakey



Topics include:

- Curricular Connections & Digital Literacies
- Permission
- Cyber Safety
- Digital Citizenship
- Blog Platforms
- Blog Exemplars and Scaffolded Learning
- Blog Assessment and Criteria
- Digital Writing Instruction
- Blogging Ideas
- Peer Feedback Instruction
- Blogging Resources



BC's Language Arts Curricular Goals

(BC Ministry of Education, 2013)

- Develop language & thinking **skills**
- Access, understand, process, & use oral, written, digital, & multimedia forms of communication
- Develop an understanding of language & literacy concepts to accomplish **goals**

-construct meaning
-think creatively & critically
-analyze
-evaluate
-synthesize

-personal
-social
-academic

Digital Literacy Framework

(BC Ministry of Education, n.d.)

- Research and Information Literacy
- Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making
- Creativity and Innovation
- Digital Citizenship
- Communication and Collaboration
- Technology and Operations Concepts



Permission

Administrative



Parental



Cyber Safety

be careful with strangers



never give away personal information

only get on social networks with parents permission



im not going to tell him.

dont tell anyone your online passwords



tell an adult

Digital Citizenship

netiquette → respectful behaviour online

Blogging Ground Rules

- Discuss things together
- Be prepared to change your mind
- Think before you write
- Respect others' viewpoints—don't just use your own
- Share all the ideas and information



Blog Platforms



A variety of platforms exist →

- Kidblog™
- Edublog™
- Class Blogmeister™
- ThinkQuest™
- Ning™

Research which one best suits your needs

Blog Exemplars & Scaffolded Learning

Students need to see:

- examples of quality blogs or blog exemplars
- modelling of how to create their own blog (on paper or computer)

The Edublog Award

Class Blog Shed: The Literacy Shed



Blog Criteria and Assessment

- ❖ Build criteria
- ❖ Use rubrics
- ❖ Use formative assessment



BLOG RUBRIC

NAME: _____ BLOG NAME: _____ POST NAME: _____

	+2 MEETS	+1 DEVELOPING	+0 BEGINNING
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Total:			

Assessed by: _____

Date: _____

(candidlessons.blogspot.ca)

Digital Writing Instruction

Writing workshop approach

mini-lessons → online composition → post online → peer/teacher feedback



Blog Ideas

- Various writing activities →

-reactions to thought-provoking questions
 -journal entries
 -class writing activities
 -opinions on various topics
 -current events
 -new vocabulary
 -best writing samples

- E-portfolios

- HOT Blogging to respond to literature
 (Zawilinski, 2009)



Peer Feedback Instruction

1. Compliment the writer in a specific way
2. Add new information
3. Make a connection
4. End with a question
5. Proofread your comment



Recommended Blogging Resources

Hicks, T. *The digital writing workshop*. (2009). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Parisi, L., & Crosby, B. (2012). *Making connections with blogging. Authentic learning for today's classrooms*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Integration of Technology in Education.

Richardson, W. (2010). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.



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- Slide 5 Clipart A: Edgewood Elementary Principal's Wiki. (2015). *Boy principal office* [gif]. Retrieved from <http://edge-elementaryprincipals.wikispaces.com/>
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- Slide 15 Images: Leakey, K. (2015)