

Teachers First: Blog Ideas for the Classroom

Retrieved from: <http://www.teachersfirst.com/content/blog>

Critique a web site

Post a link to a web site related to a topic you are studying and invite students to give their personal evaluation: Does the site show bias? Does it seem well-researched? Is it a reliable source?

The week in Review

Appoint a weekly blog team in your elementary classroom to write that week's blog entry, describing the events of the week in Room XYZ. Invite moms and dads to comment and watch the excitement grow! Soon you will have students begging to write the summaries.

Bonus: Those who are at home due to illness will not feel as disconnected from their classroom, a great boon during flu season!

Find the facts

Post a statement with no supporting facts. Ask students to find facts to support or refute the opinion, using links to reliable web sites and their own persuasive explanations. This could work well for environmental issues, political issues, or any topic that is debatable.

Respond to a reading

Practice good reading strategies and check comprehension by asking students to respond to an assigned reading, reflecting on how it applies to their own experience. For example, after reading a non-fiction piece about the McCarthy Era, students could tell about their own experiences with labeling.

Write a sports story (gr 3-12)

Have students write a newspaper-style sports account of their own soccer game or swim meet. Be sure that they do not use full names of any participants. Initials work best (this is a good place for a mini-lesson on Internet safety). Or they could write up actual school teams, but that is not as personal. Encourage them to read and comment to each other or to invite parents to comment (younger students).

Comment on current events

Post a link to a current events story and ask students to comment on its implications in your local community or their own lives. Even young students can respond to stories from the local paper's online pages.

Report on a vacation or long weekend (gr 1-12)

When returning from a break, ask students to write a blog entry from the point of view of the family dog on their weekend trip or even as the duffle bag/suitcase they packed and took along. Always encourage commenting on other's stories.

Post from an "educational trip" (gr 1-12)

Any time a student is absent on an "educational trip," i.e. the family pulls the kids out to go away, require regular blog postings from the trip or as soon as they return, telling about the things on the trip that connect to what they have been learning in the classroom. Ex. What biomes did you visit? What predators and prey did you see? If they are creative, encourage them to write from a different point of view, such as the castle at Disney seeing all these people arriving.

Role-play a point of view (gr 3-12)

Have students write a blog entry from a different angle. Have them write as an inanimate object, such as an igneous rock when you are studying types of rock. Choose curriculum-related people or objects and assign a specific thing they must talk about, preferably something that will prompt a heated opinion and require that they demonstrate understanding of curriculum, as well. Ex You are a colonist, and you just found out that they are going to tax your tea.

“Meet” during snow days and unexpected days off (gr 3-12)

If you teach in an area of the world that is prone to sudden days off due to inclement weather, make a deal with your students that they will earn extra credit for posting to the blog on such days. As soon as you find out that you have the day off, go on the class blog as a teacher and post a prompt, even something as simple as “What unexpected surprises did you have this snow day?” After they come in from playing in the snow, they’ll love having something else to do. Note: for those without Internet access at home, allow them to WRITE on paper for extra credit and help them find time at school to post, so they do not feel left out.

Report on a field trip or virtual field trip (gr 2-12)

Have students act as reporters telling about a field trip or special event. They can pretend to have interviewed a cow at the farm they visited or be straightforward in reporting the real events of the trip. Students could also write up a virtual field trip they took online in class.

Write a neighborhood or community tour with pictures (gr 1-12)

As a culmination of a unit on your community or local history create a neighborhood or community tour blog. Each student (or pair) can take and upload a picture and tell about it. Then invite others in the school or parents to make comments about their favorite locations. Be sure that you do not include any picture of students, for safety’s sake.

Bounce around a hot topic (gr 6-12)

Middle-schoolers always have an exaggerated sense of what is “fair.” Use their strong opinions to spark dialog on your blog. Should backpacks be allowed in class? Are the required gym uniforms fair? Listen for hot topics, then use them to develop logical thinking and writing with support for your opinions. High schoolers can take this even further by discussing topics outside their immediate surroundings.

Make a “suggestion box” blog (gr 2-12)

Invite students to contribute ideas to make our classroom a better place or make this a better course.

Question blog (gr 2-12)

Invite students to submit a question about course content, related ideas, or “I have always wondered” in advance of starting a new unit. Asking everyone to express one curiosity before starting the unit will give you a place to focus and make the content more meaningful to them. This idea is sort of an electronic KWL Chart!

Study hint blog (gr 4-12)

Give extra credit for study hints posted before a test or quiz.

Fitness blog (gr 2-12)

Encourage students to post ideas for healthy eating and exercise. They can tell how far they ran or what healthy options they have found in the cafeteria.

Organization tips (gr 4-12)

Invite students to share tips for how they stay organized, not just for school, but for life. Maybe parents can contribute too: “I always put a post-it note on my steering wheel to remember to drop off DVDs at the rental place.” Seeing how others stay organized really helps the more scatter-brained folks who never thought of these ideas. Ask some teachers and others in the school to contribute, too -- may be even the principal. Learning support and ADHD students would really benefit from this one.

Recipes for success (gr 5-12)

At the end of a unit, a marking period, or even school year, have students write “recipes for success” in that unit, class, etc. These can remain for others to try in the future. Encourage actual recipe format, including ingredients and procedure.

Recipes—for real (gr 4-12)

As you study fractions, world languages, or different cultures, nothing is more popular than using recipes. Have your students share one on the class blog then comment if they try one that another student posted.

Blog Ice Breaker (gr 6-12)

This is especially effective near the start of the school year. Use student-selected pseudonyms to register your student users (they must tell only you what their secret identity is) and allow them to comment outside of class on hot topics from class discussion for a few weeks. After a few weeks, ask in class if anyone thinks they know who each of the pseudonyms REALLY is and if they can match all pseudonyms to actual classmates. This is a great way to allow even the shyest people to comment without fear to start the year and to find out which quiet, non-participants in class are quite vocal at a computer. Your students will know each other far better, creating a greater sense of classroom community.

Four Images (gr 6-12)

As a first blog entry to allow students to get to know both each other and the blogging tool, use an adaptation of [this idea](#) from high school math teacher Dan Meyer. Ask each student to use four images (edited at will) to "sell" or "tell" about himself/herself. Your techno-savvy students will go to town, and you will not only learn about how your students view themselves, but also about who has the best tech skills to help others when you need it.

Lab research collaboration (gr 7-12)

In a high school science class, encourage students to share lab data they found and collaborate in writing up lab reports on the class blog. You can require lab report format, but other lab partners can read and comment on reports they feel are great (or lacking). This also allows students to see the variety of data collected from the class. Even if you only require one "blogged" lab report a marking period, the process will make a difference.

Continuing Stories (gr 2-12)

Start a blog story (set up the setting, characters, and initial situation in an opening paragraph) and let each student who visits comment by adding a sentence or two. If someone gets unruly or ridiculous, the other authors will quickly comment to that effect! You can make the story support curriculum, too. For example, the story could be "historical fiction" about a family during the Civil War or baby geese who are migrating.

Continuing Vocabulary (gr 6-12)

Start a blog story at the beginning of the year as you begin vocabulary in your English class. Each week, require students to add to the story, using a LOGICAL sentence that both fits the story and uses one of that week's vocab words. The stories will become lengthy and outrageous as the year goes in, but the kids will be re-reading the words over and over to reinforce them -- and laughing as they do! They will NEVER forget those words!

Find a "Sister Community"(gr 6-12)

Just as real communities often form relationships with other towns in other states or countries, your class blog community can set up a direct link with another class blog reading the same play or studying the Civil War at the same time. Imagine if your 11th grade "yankee" U.S. History class in New Hampshire conversed with a class in Mississippi during this unit? The blog comments would be fascinating. All you need to do is use a bulletin board (such as a tool coming in 2007 on TeachersFirst) to find that comparable class and allow them to join your blog as you join theirs. WOW! Even Romeo and Juliet viewed from New York and Sidney could be very different—or very similar?