**Blogging in Grade 5/6P**

WHAT IS A BLOG?

The word ‘blog’ is short for ‘web log’. A blog is an online journal that is frequently updated with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. As a blog is on the world wide web, it is available to anyone to view, however individuals need permission to post on a blog.

A blog has three main parts: the post, the comments and the sidebar.

WHAT IS ‘BLOGGING’?

*‘Blog’* can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain or add content to a blog*. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even messages for each other via widgets on the blogs. It is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.

RATIONALE FOR EDUCATIONAL BLOGGING

Blogs are becoming a part of our ever changing environment, and are helping to reshape the way we learn. The content of our blog is a teacher-directed snapshot of our classroom, and a virtual learning space for exploring, wondering and having fun together. Through blogging, we invite others to collaborate to form a broader learning community. As a virtual learning community, blogs offer great potential in terms of transforming the learning and teaching in our classroom. When the Ultranet is made available, blogging will be an application within its structure, allowing us to connect with local and global audiences.

To blog effectively, many skills and concepts need to be addressed effectively. We wish to go beyond merely transferring classroom writing into digital spaces. Through sharing our learning in a digital space, we recognise that we are now writing for a public audience. For this reason, we need to credit the sources of pictures, music and other things that are the property of others, and use comment tools in a constructive and supportive way.

We hope that through blogging:

* Students will be engaged in conversation and learning
* Global conversations about learning will be made possible
* We will have the opportunity for collective and collaborative learning
* Students will have the opportunity to read their classmates’ blogs and those of others
* We will learn to navigate and read web materials more efficiently and critically
* We will explore other uses for our blogs to further support our teaching and learning
* We will provide a space for sharing our learning and opinions, where students, teachers and families can connect with the wider community around the world and learn from each other
* Learners will come to appreciate that knowledge is interconnected, not just a set of discreet facts
* Students will gain a new perspective on the meaning of ‘voice’. As they explore their own learning and thinking through blogging, their individual voices will emerge.
* Students will see that their voices are essential to the conversations we need to have about learning
* Students will foster ownership and choice
* We will gain profound recognition from our worldwide audience
* Students will feel more enthusiastic about writing and communicating, when they recognise that many others may read and respond
* Students will learn about the power of published work and the responsibilities involved with public wriitng
* Students will feel motivated to excel further
* Students will learn the skills required to foster a contributing audience on our blog
* Students will be able to reflect upon and evaluate their learning journeys through archived blogging records of their ongoing learning
* We will have the opportunity to connect with experts on various topics of interest

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMENTING

As stated, a blog contains three main sections: the posts, the comments and the sidebar. We wish to establish purposeful and supportive communication skills through our comments. We comment positively by:

* Using correct capitalisation (sentence beginnings and proper nouns)
* Using correct punctuation to communicate accurately
* Using correct spelling
* Using high level vocabulary
* Proofreading our comments
* Start our comment with a greeting and finish our comment with a closing statement (we do this as it makes it easier for us to follow the conversation within a comment section)
* Providing a topic sentence and a conclusion in our comment
* Being positive, encouraging and specific
* Not repeating ourselves OR others (to ensure this, read others’ comments first)
* Adding important and relevant information
* Ending a comment with a relevant question to initiate conversation, engage the audience, gain a response, and/or clarify uncertainties or curiosities
* You should not write anything on a blog that you would not say or write in your classroom. Use common sense, but if you are ever in doubt ask a teacher or parent whether or not what you are considering posting is appropriate.

Our comments will communicate our thoughts and ideas. A ‘one-point’ comment is a general comment that doesn’t add very much to the post. For example: *I like your blog. Please visit mine!* A ‘two-point’ comment adds something to the conversation. For example, a commenter might complement the writer in a specific way or add new information to their post. Another idea is to make a connection. Maybe the post reminds you of an experience that you’ve had. Share that connection! Try to end your comment with a relevant question, that way an interesting conversation can develop.

ONLINE SAFETY AND SECURITY

Keeping our blog secure is of upmost importance to us. Through blogging, we have the opportunity to learn about appropriate online behaviour. To ensure the safety of our students when blogging, the following agreements must be followed:

* In any post or comment, we will only use students’ first names
* All posts or comments will be screened and approved by the classroom teacher(s) before they are published and made public
* Parents who leave comments are asked to leave their first names only, so as not to identify their children
* All students must abide by our school internet user agreement.
* All class rules that we establish on our blogging learning journey will be followed
* As with any posts you make online, you should never include any identifying personal information when posting on our blog. No surname, phone numbers, addresses, or photos that can identify yourself or others.
* Your teacher may use their surname to identify themselves.
* Your blogging username can be your first name followed by your surname initial only. For example, if I were a student, I my username would be caithlinp.

Qualities of a Good Blogger:

1. Title

2. Interesting ideas

3. Connections to others writing about the same ideas, and links to what they wrote, and extensions (challenging, qualifying, adding to their ideas)

4. Images, multimedia embeds (and citations of sources, and no copyright violations - see Creative Commons Search)

5. Quality of communication (whether writing, movie-making, podcasting, etc)

6. Presentation: font large enough and readable? blank lines separating paragraphs? images and movies attractively formatted?

1. Video *How to make quality comments,* [*http://yollisclassblog.blogspot.com/2011/02/quad-blogging-buddies-meet-mrs-yollis.html*](http://yollisclassblog.blogspot.com/2011/02/quad-blogging-buddies-meet-mrs-yollis.html)
2. *Flat classroom project:* <http://flatclassrooms.ning.com/> Overview - <http://www.flatclassroomproject.net/> About -http://www.flatclassroomproject.net/about.html
3. Teacher Challenge: <http://teacherchallenge.edublogs.org/about/>
4. *How to grow a blog*: <http://www.teachandlearn.ca/blog/2007/10/27/how-to-grow-a-blog/>
5. *Why I should revisit your blog*: <http://pmniewman.global2.vic.edu.au/>