

Classroom Blog

Pedagogic Rationale

Partnership - This type of blog is designed to improve the communication between all of the stakeholders in each pupil's education, for example, involving parents more in the day-to-day working of their children's education is important and providing a medium such as a classroom blog allows for improved partnership. If a parent wants to see how his/her child is doing in class he/she can "easily locate the writing on that student's page through a list of names on a side column of the blog" (Zawilinski 2009).

Tutorials – Giving the pupils access to tutorial videos of how to use the blogging, wiki and social bookmarking software correctly and safely, gives the pupils increased ownership of their learning and allows them to problem solve their issues with the software independently, which may lead to an increase in pupil autonomy and a reduction of the class group's reliance on the teacher.

Motivation – A classroom blog can give the pupils a platform for their work to be viewed by the entire internet community. If there is a system for pupils work to be posted on the blog due to outstanding achievement, it could lead to the pupils working harder to be afforded the opportunity to be showcased on the classroom blog.

Teacher/Pupil Activities

Teacher

- Upload information about the course and the classroom activities
- Maintain the blog to ensure its smooth operation inside and outside of the classroom
- Screen comments before they are posted on the blog

Pupils

- Keep up to the date with the homework and assessment information by checking the blog regularly
- Aspire to having their work showcased on the class blog, as the best the class has to offer in any given activity

Parents

- Keep up to date with their children's studies and the day-to-day activities occurring in the classroom
- See the standard of work that is being completed by their children and their classmates

Important Teaching and Observation Points

Commenting – It is vital that the commenting feature of the blog is strictly moderated and that there is no chance of inappropriate material being posted. Most blogging platforms facilitate an administrative account (for the teacher) to enable the screening of every comment and post before it is visible to the readers of the blog.

Update the blog regularly – To get maximum benefit from this type of blog, it is important that the pupils and parents see that it is updated regularly and that it is obvious that the blog is a vital component of your teaching strategies and the pupils' learning. If the blog is not updated and maintained with new material there is the probability that the page will not be visited by pupils and parents on a frequent basis. This would lead to many of the classroom blog's advantages being diluted and diminished over time.

Resources

The resources required to first set up a classroom blog are:

1. Teacher Biography (optional)
2. Class Biography (optional)
3. Tutorials and Walkthroughs for Using Blogs, Wikis and Social Bookmarking
4. Course Information
 - a. Syllabus
 - b. Assessment of Coursework
 - c. Course Timetable
 - d. Course activities

As you begin to use your classroom blog and with the feedback given by pupils in class and the comments left on the blog's "comments" page the blog will evolve and become the hub of activity that it is designed to be and the resources will begin to become more organic and easier to create and manage.

Suggested Variations/Progressions

- As the pupils become comfortable with blogging and the classroom blog you can ask for the pupils to become guest publishers. This would mean asking them to write the class newsletter in groups, on a rota or whole class system. This would lead to the pupils gaining a sense of ownership of the blog and would encourage them to tell their parents and other people about the blog.
- Ask a different pupil to post the motivational post for each day, again encouraging a sense of ownership within the class group