Does Blogging Enhance Writing Skills?

CRIN E09: Designs for Technology-Enhanced Learning
Christine Ammirati
Gina Keesee
December 7, 2010

Article # 1

APA Citation	Cottle, A., (2008). Integrating 21st century skills in schools using a class blogging project. *West Virginia Online Action Research Journal.* Retrieved from http://www.wvcpd.org/PLAJournal
Participants	74 students in a rural southern West Virginia school. Most students had Internet access at home but had never set up or participated in a blog before.
Implementation	The teacher created a class blog project using David Warlick's ClassBlogmeister.com. This free site is designed for teachers to participate with their students. Students were assigned "Blogging Buddies" and were required to make comments about each other's blogs. They blogged and commented on each other's posts for several weeks. They were also supposed to revise and edit their postings, as well as use spell check.
Data Collection/Analysis	Students completed a survey at the end through Zoomerang.com. Out of 75 students, 67 completed the survey. They were asked 10 questions about the blogging project, and had two opportunities for open-ended responses. The students responded to the survey using a five point scale. Thirteen of the students typed in a response to the open ended questions.
Findings	95% of those that responded liked being able to comment on other student's writing the most. 91% liked being able to read other student's writing, and 86% liked being able to type their final drafts rather than write them. Forty-one percent were also blogging at home.
Educational implications	This project allowed helped engage students in active learning, increased student and teacher relationships, increased higher order thinking skills and improved flexibility in teaching and learning. Students could share their view points and it gave them a supportive environment for their reading and their writing. Some students much preferred writing in a blog over paper and pencil writing. Writing skills were also improved with editing and revising of drafts. Students were engaged, motivated and had good attitudes, and they interacted with one another in an authentic learning experience. This project also enhanced their curriculum and taught them to use 21st century technology.

Article # 2:

APA Citation	Ellison, N., & Wu, Y., (2008). *Blogging in the classroom : A preliminary exploration of student attitudes and impacts on comprehension.* Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, 17*(1)*, 99-122.
Participants	52 junior and senior college students at a large Midwestern university.
Implementation	Participants completed a series of short (one to two pages) writing assignments over the semester as part of their graded assignments. Six assignments were completed and three were posted as blog entries. Students created their own websites mainly using Blogger.
Data Collection/Analysis	Students posted their assignments and were required to make comments on at least two of their peer's entries. An online survey was made available after every assignment, and students received extra credit for completing this. Surveys asked about student's comprehension and students overall perceptions of the experience of instructional blogging.
Findings	Reading other students blogs was more helpful than completing the assignment or reading comments on their own blogs. Students enjoyed reading and commenting on their peer's entries, being exposed to different perspectives, and the interactiveness of the blogging, made students want to think and write more.
Educational implications	Blogs need to be utilized in instructional ways to support the particular content area being taught. Blogging can be instrumental in helping students to think and write more, learn what other people think, as well as make comments about what they think about the subject. (Similar to what we do in technology class now)

Article # 3:

APA Citation	Kelly, A., & Safford, K. (2009). Does teaching complex sentences have to be complicated? Lessons from children's online writing. *Literacy 43*(3), Retrieved October 31, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost
Participants	Two British Year 6 classrooms (5th grade). No students had previous experience in blogging. Students had access to blog both at school and at home. Researchers examined 248 total entries.
Implementation	English students blogged for 6 weeks during the 2006 World Cup. Researchers investigated the use of complex sentence structure in the blogs, "an indicator of sophistication in children's written texts." (p. 118) At the outset, researchers posted game results and asked questions to prompt blogs however the majority of student blogging ultimately was in response to peer's posts. The researchers found that the participants were "much more interested in presenting their own ideas and responding to each other's comments." (p. 120)
Data Collection/Analysis	• Broke down writing into different purposes/genres: chat room, team encouragement, voicing dissent, reflections, and hypotheses. • Examined phrasing and vocabulary choices • Analyzed sentence types and structures
Findings	Students spontaneously used complex language forms. "It was the blog that got these children writing at length and with commitment, and with syntactic complexity." (p. 119) Of 248 blogs, 125 had complex sentences, 91 simple and 32 compound sentences (p.121) • Contradict prediction that blog entries "would be elliptical and more akin to textese." (p. 121) • Counter the pervading idea that "technology is the cause of diminishing standards in children's literacy." (p. 121) Researchers offer detailed example of student considered to be a "reluctant writer… whose literacy folder was virtually empty, [who] expressed his ideas using multi-clause, complex sentences, which include adverbial clauses of condition, reason, and result." (p. 118)
Educational implications	Blogging experience was enhanced due to its partnership with the World Cup, "a real-life world event, which their out-of-school communities were also watching and commenting upon." (p. 121) When blogging is presented in an authentic and meaningful context, it creates opportunities for students "to enact implicit syntactical knowledge. Teachers could then explicitly build on this spontaneous usage in the classroom by discussing and extending children's language choices and forms." (p. 121)

Article # 4:

APA Citation	Drexler, W., Dawson, K., & Ferdig, R.E. (2007). Collaborative blogging as a means to develop elementary expository writing skills. *Electronic journal for the integration of technology in education*, *6*. Retrieved November 8, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost
Participants	18 third grade students (11 boys and 7 girls) at a large, independent preparatory school in St. Petersburg, Florida with a predominantly upper middle class SES and a moderate degree of racial diversity: 2 African American, 2 Hispanic, 1 Asian, and 13 Caucasian students with 4 different countries of origin represented. Students blogged from school's computer lab with option to finish from home computers as needed. Project extended over nine weeks and had a strictly regimented timetable of entries.
Implementation	Students paired with preservice teachers on a writing project about Native American tribes. After students selected a tribe, the preservice teachers vetted and then shared websites for student use. Students then prepared concept maps using Inspiration. Students and preservice teachers communicated throughout the writing process with the preservice teachers providing feedback about students' writing. As a culminating project, the students wrote a five-paragraph essay that they incorporated into a MediaBlender online presentation. http://w3.shorecrest.org/~thirdgrade/GR3/Drexlerclasswebsite/projects.html
Data Collection/Analysis	Teacher inquiry method using six strategies: survey about attitudes toward writing, teacher's reflective blog/field notes, student blogs, interviews, student concept maps, and student five-paragraph presentations. Blogs were analyzed systematically: "Data read to establish familiarity…. Data organized chronologically and coded…. Salient data were extracted to support (or disconfirm) each category…. Categories transformed into findings and implications." (p.148)
Findings	1- Helped improve students' attitudes toward writing 2- Feedback rather than the use of technology itself, increased students' motivation to write. 3- Improved students' writing and supported development of related skills and knowledge. 4- * Students transferred knowledge learned to other academic and social facets of classroom. 5- * Students' technology skills improved even though official technology-related instruction was not provided. 6- * Students developed visual literacy skills as they transformed their essays into online presentations. 7- * Enabled differentiated instruction while ensuring everyone met with at least some success. * "Unintended results"
Educational implications	Project template can be replicated across grade levels and content areas. Collaboration can take place between elementary students and preservice teachers, secondary students, adopt-a-school volunteers, and parents (p.154). Considerations include student keyboarding skills, project pacing and timing, frequency of feedback, and self-disclosure as a means to build rapport.

References for other articles read and considered:

Barone, D., & Wright, T.E. (2008). Literacy instruction with digital and media technologies. *The Reading Teacher*, *62*(4), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost

Boling, E., Castek, J., Zawilinski, L., Barton, K., & Nierlich, T. (2008). Collaborative literacy: blogs and internet projects. *The Reading Teacher*, *61*(6), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost

Cottle, A. (2008). Integrating 21st century skills in schools using a class blogging project. *West Virginia Online Action Research Journal 13*(2), Retrieved November 21, 2010 from http://www.wvcpd.org/cmsprgm.aspx?name=PLA%20Journal-Featured%20Articles

Ducate, L.C. & Lomicka, L.L.. (2008). Adventures in the blogosphere: From blog readers to blog writers. *Computer Assisted Language Learning 21*(1), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://www.informaworld.com/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/09588220701865474

Glewa, M., & Bogan, M.B. (2007). Improving children's literacy while promoting digital fluency through the use of blogs in the classroom: Surviving the hurricane. *Journal of Literacy and Technology*, *8*(1), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost

Huffaker, D. (2005). The educated blogger: using weblogs to promote literacy in the classroom. *Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education Journal*, *13*(2), Retrieved November 21, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost

Pascopella, A., & Richardson, W. (2009). The new writing pedagogy. *District Administration*, *45*(10/11), Retrieved November 21, 2010 from http://www.districtadministration.com/

Ramaswami, R. (2008). The prose of blogging (and a few cons, too). *T H E Journal, 35* (11), Retrieved November 2, 2010 from http://www.thejournal.com/articles/23562

Pennay, A. (2009). Techno-Literacy: A boon for writing instruction in the classroom. *California English 15*(1), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost

Smith, C.C. (2008). Technologies for transcending a focus on errors: Blogs and democratic aspirations in first-year composition. *Journal of Basic Writing (CUNY)27*(1), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://www.boydprinting.com/Default.aspx

Witte, S. (2007). That's online writing, not boring school writing: Writing with blogs and the talkback project. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 51*(2), Retrieved November 5, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost

Zawilinski, L. (2009). Hot blogging: a framework for blogging to promote higher order thinking. *The Reading Teacher*, *62*(8), Retrieved November 21, 2010 from http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.wm.edu/ehost