

[Blogging with Elementary School Students](#)

All of our teachers at my elementary school maintain their own classroom blog. As I wrote about in [Blogs vs. Static Website](#) and [Changes in Classroom Blogs](#), we still have a long way to go as we need to move forward from merely a one sided communication tool to an online learning space that encourages, fosters and supports students' creativity and learning.

Being able to read AND express yourself in a digital world is an important part of being literate in the 21st century.

[Bill Ferriter](#) on [Digitally Speaking](#) says:

Blogging and podcasting has allowed me to create a forum where my students discuss current events connected to our social studies curriculum while developing language arts skills like critical thinking and persuasive dialogue. It has also given my students the opportunity to be creators—rather than simply consumers—of online content. Finally, blogging and podcasting have given my students an audience for their ideas, which has increased levels of interest and motivation.

Blogging is one way of linking writing, reading, and connecting information and learning together. It seems the perfect venue to introduce elementary school students to the online world of networked learning. They need to get acquainted to [reading and writing hyperlinked text](#).

Somewhere between 4th and 6th grade (10-12 year olds), students discover social network places such as [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#). Their older siblings, cousins, neighbors or friends “are on it” and they long to be part of that network to chat, upload and comment on each others' photos and generally know what is going on in their school and with their group of friends.

Now is the time for us educators to expose them to safe practices AND to academic uses of online spaces.

One of our 5th grade teachers, Mrs. K., has maintained her classroom blog for over a year now. (Sorry, but is password protected for now, as all our school's classroom blogs are).

It has been a place where she posts:

- communication to parents
- homework assignments
- reminders
- rubrics

At the beginning of this current year, she took a step forward by creating usernames and a passwords for each one of her students as “subscribers”. This allowed students to leave comments on posts that she had created.

Blogging With Elementary School Students by Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano www.langwitches.org/blog



Students were enthusiastic and each blog post generates quite a few responses. Here are some of my observations:

- There are no formal assignments to comment or assessment of the content.
- Several students are using the blog as a forum to stay in touch after school and now during winter break.
- There are many comments, completely unrelated and irrelevant to the blog post content
- Comments are sprinkled with typical tweenie exclamation point writing and plenty of [emoticons](#).

has!! 😊 :) 😊 :) 😊 :) 😊 :) 😊 :)
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 😊 !!!! Oh and 1 more thing ... " MERRY
XMAS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 😊 :) 😊 :) 😊 :) 😊 :) 😊 :) " Bye C u la8er alli8ers!!!!

- Each student was given a username that represents their number on the class list. They are to use and address each other with that number in order to not reveal their identity to an outsider. Yes, the blog is behind a password protection, but it is important to get the younger children aware and used to safety. More and more students are using their first names anyway when signing their comment. They are referring to each other with their first name and even clarifying which username belongs to which student!!
- It is clear that protecting their online identity is an issue that has to be visited over and over again.

The children have been begging to get their own blogs. Mrs. K is ready to jump on board and start integrating blogging into her teaching.



BUT...

...although there is merit in allowing students to get comfortable in their classroom space by learning how to read posts and other comments, sign in, type and respond in the blog environment....

...there comes a time, when to get serious...

- How can we prepare the classroom space to become a space for learning, reflecting, and for a portfolio of their learning process?
- What are the expectations that the teacher needs to make clear of what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of content in that learning space?



I am taking the time to create a blogging guide/unit plan for this 5th grade teacher and other elementary school teachers who want to start their own blogging adventure with their younger students.

The purpose of this guide is to address the following topics:

- Introduce students (3rd grade and up) to the world of academic blogging.
 - [Outline of unit lesson plan](#)
 - [Introduction](#)
 - [Online Safety](#)
 - [Effective Commenting](#)
 - [Relevant Writing](#)
- Setting up a blog
- [Logistics of formatting blog posts](#)
- Difference between hypertext and “traditional” writing and reading
- How to create a learning community on your classroom blog
- Connecting to a world wide audience
- Assessment and evaluation of student blogging

So follow along, as I am exploring and reflecting on each one of these of topics as we are planning for lessons and reflecting upon outcomes.

Any contribution of links to resources, examples or anecdotes of your adventures in blogging with younger students are greatly appreciated.

Check out the following links for more resources about blogging with students (Thanks to Larry’s post on [Best Sources for Advice on Student Blogging](#) for pointing me into the direction, that kept leading to more and more resources) :

- Sue Waters’ [Tips on Blogging with Students](#)
- Bil Ferriter’s [Two Critical Tips For Classroom Blog Projects](#)
- Kim Cofino’s [Blogging is Elementary](#)
- Al Upton’s [Class blogs - management, moderation and protection](#)

<http://langwitches.org/blog/2008/12/23/blogging-with-elementary-school-students>

