What are the Benefits of Blogging in the Elementary Classroom?

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Abstract

This study examined the benefits of blogging in the elementary classroom. Research was conducted in a fourth grade classroom that used student blogging on laptop computers as a part of the writing program. Data was collected through observation, teacher and student interviews, and examination and analysis of student blogs. The findings show that blogging is highly beneficial for elementary students, resulting in increased motivation, strengthened writing skills, and engagement in an authentic activity. In order to increase student learning, teachers must motivate their students by creating authentic and purposeful learning activities that involve student engagement, communication and collaboration with one another, and technology-rich experiences that bring out of school literacies into the classroom.

What are the Benefits of Blogging in the Elementary Classroom?

Technology can be used in the literacy classroom in a variety of ways to support and enhance instruction. Integrating technology into literacy instruction is becoming increasingly important as teachers are faced with creating a literacy environment that is appealing to a wide range of reading levels and learners, and the world is becoming one of technological literacies and global communication. Students of today are competent and fluent in the technologies that are available to them at home and outside of school, using them regularly in their personal lives. Technologies such as computers, iPods, and the many forums available on the Internet, such as instant messaging, emailing, and social networking websites, are all second nature to children today. It is necessary for teachers to find ways to bring these technologies into the classroom in order to close the gap that exists between home and school and engage students in ways that are familiar and comfortable for them.

One of the ways to use technology in the classroom is through the use of blogging. Barone and Wright (2008) suggest that some teachers may identify with past models of literacy as paper and pencil bound; however, new conceptions involve continually changing views of reading and writing, particularly, with the advent of the Internet. According to Boling (2008), when teachers act as moderators and create blogs, they provide students with opportunities to connect safely with real audiences while learning. Boling (2008) argues that this, in turn, can result in increased motivation and literacy engagement as students read, write, create, and produce for meaningful and authentic purposes. Blogs can be used in place of paperbound journals to record thoughts, respond to literature, reflect on class work, and create writing pieces. It is entirely up to

the teacher on how to use blogs in the classroom. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking skills in a technology rich environment. Increased motivation and engagement in authentic activities will encourage students to write and strengthen their literacy skills, while enjoying learning and interacting with peers as well. Using blogging in the classroom can benefit students in many ways and promote traditional literacy skills.

This study involved a 4th grade classroom that used blogging as a part of their regular writing routine. Laptop computers were brought into the classroom during a forty-five minute technology block approximately two times per month so students were able to write on their personal blogs, linked off of the classroom blog. Through observation, student interviews, teacher interviews, and examination of blog posts, I examined how blogging in the elementary classroom benefits students. My research has demonstrated that there are many benefits of using blogging with elementary students. The findings suggest that blogging results in increased motivation, strengthened writing skills, and engagement in an authentic activity.

Theoretical Framework

In order to determine how blogging in the elementary classroom can benefit students, it may be helpful to consider how literacy is acquired and language is learned. Sociocultural theory and New Literacy Studies are two theories that offer specific framework pertinent to the research that has been conducted on the topic.

Sociocultural Theory

Literacy is defined as a socially based practice, mediated by a person's culture (Larson & Marsh, 2005). According to Gee (2001), language is used as a tool for

communication and acts as a functional system within the social context and beyond. Children learn language in order to participate in the communicative world that surrounds them, but also learn language for social reasons as well. Humans are born with an innate desire to be social and share emotional bonds with others, and are able to facilitate this desire through the learning of language. As Barton and Hamilton (1998) suggest, literacy is a social activity that can be found in social interactions among people. Therefore, literacy practices involve all the socializing that is done each day, through both formal and informal interactions with others. This socializing begins in the home with a person's primary discourse, or communication that is culturally based and done with intimates, and is later extended to include secondary discourses, or ways of communicating with non-intimates beyond the home.

Blogging is one way to communicate in a social context through the medium of technology. According to Larson and Marsh (2005), the practice of blogging in the classroom defines the child as an active member of a constantly changing community of learners in which knowledge constructs and is constructed by a larger cultural system. From this perspective, conceptualizing learning creates a shift from the traditional teacher-centered/student-centered classroom to one that is learning-centered. This means that in the classroom, according to Larson and Marsh (2005), learning occurs through participation in social, cultural, and historical contexts that are mediated by instruction. For elementary students who are still developing their uses of language and forming their literacy skills, social interaction is key, as it broadens their perspectives and allows for the sharing and communication of ideas.

New Literacy Studies

In addition to sociocultural theory, New Literacy Studies may also be helpful in answering my research question. NLS argues that literacy learning does not only occur in and out of school, in both formal and informal settings, but also, in everyday interactions among people, as a means for establishing and maintaining social relations (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Larson and Marsh (2005) explain that literacy learning is not restricted to one specific place or time, because it occurs in everyday activities across multiple contexts and at different times. In understanding everyday life, teachers are able to construct meaningful contexts for literacy learning. According to Larson and Marsh (2005), it is critical for teachers to understand NLS in order to obtain a better understanding of their literacy practices and the literacy practices of their students and families. Teachers must move beyond traditional literacy exercises to include authentic practices connected to broader social and cultural goals in the classroom.

One of the principles of NLS is that the impact of new information and communication technologies has changed the nature of literacy and therefore, what needs to be learned (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). New technologies have impacted literacy instruction, as they are becoming more a part of the everyday life and practices of students today. Literacy is constantly evolving, and as it changes, new technologies emerge. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006), literacies can be defined as socially recognized ways of generating, communicating, and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts within contexts of participation in discourses. Technology has changed the way individuals generate, communicate, and negotiate meaningful content through use of the Internet, online forums, social networks, Instant Messaging, and email, where they are able to share, read, and write "far more than were

20 years or even a decade ago" (Williams, 2008, p. 682). This change in communication technologies is real and dramatic in the ways it is changing how people read and write. It is important for teachers to understand these changes and how New Literacies can be brought into the classroom to engage students in ways that are familiar to them. Blogging in the elementary classroom is one way to do this, as teachers are able to create meaningful contexts for students to work in.

Research Question

Given that literacy and learning is a social practice, and the current world is one of technological and global literacies, using a blog in the classroom is one way to make learning a social, purposeful, current, and authentic practice. How does blogging in the elementary classroom benefit students?

Review of Literature

Introduction

This section of research shows what others in the professional field have discovered about using blogging and technology in the elementary classroom. The research addressed four main topics: technology as a motivating factor for students, technology as a way to engage students in their learning, blogging as an authentic activity, and blogging as a way to promote socially-constructed learning. These four topics will be further addressed in detail at this point.

Technology and Motivation

Research indicates that using technology in the classroom is motivating for students (Read & Fisher, 2006; Levin & Wadmany, 2006; Guha, 2003; Glewa & Bogan, 2007; Baker, Rozendal, & Whitenack, 2009). Levin and Wadmany (2006) interviewed 4th through 6th grade students in Israel on their views on learning, technology, and classroom practice, and found that most students believed technology is a motivating factor in their learning and a positive influence in the classroom. The students viewed technology as a tool to support their learning as well as a medium through which they can negotiate meaning (Levin & Wadmany, 2006). This study is important as it allows students' voices to be heard and considered in regards to their own learning. Levin and Wadmany (2006) also interviewed elementary teachers on their views on learning with technologies and found a similar parallel as teachers expressed that technology is important in teaching and can enhance student capabilities. Similarly, Guha (2003) interviewed elementary teachers on their personal experience and opinions of integrating technology into the classroom and found that most teachers believed technology to be a motivating factor for students in their learning. Both Guha (2003) and Levin and Wadmany (2006) found that teachers play a large role in determining technology use in schools and the classroom and how it is integrated. The amount or type of technology used in the classroom varies by teacher, but both Guha (2003) and Levin and Wadmany (2006) agree that using computers in the classroom is helpful to the learning process and interesting for students. According to Guha (2003), "computers have generated children's interest because they are easy access to a universe of information, can broaden their learning horizons, and develop multicultural awareness" (p. 341).

Read and Fisher (2006) and Huang and Liu (2007) interviewed students who kept their own personal blogs in order to find out more about why students choose to blog and how they use their blogs. Both Read and Fisher (2006) and Huang and Liu (2007) found that one of the main reasons is for communicative purposes, either with friends or with others. Using a blog in the classroom is one way to bring an out-of-school literacy into school and make a connection. Finding something that students enjoy, such as blogging, and making it relevant to their learning at school is certainly a way to motivate students, and as Huang and Liu (2007) explain, students like to share their learning experiences with friends or classmates. Read and Fisher (2006) argue that by learning more about students' blogs and the kind of writing they are doing outside of school, it is possible to make school writing more like self-sponsored writing. They further explain that one way to do this is to take advantage of the social potential of the school context (Read & Fisher, 2006). Students can communicate with each other in their classroom by discussing books and other topics on a blog.

Similarly, Glewa and Bogan (2007) reported that students were motivated to blog and use technology by being able to communicate with peers. They implemented a literacy project where students were able to respond to an authentic issue on a classroom blog. Using the recent hurricane that had occurred in the town where the school was located as a prompt, they encouraged students to use the classroom blog as a space to share their feelings with one another as an interactive journal (Glewa & Bogan, 2007). Glewa and Bogan (2007) reported that using technology as the medium for discussion and writing enhanced the literacy project as it motivated the students to respond, reflect,

and share their ideas and feelings. The students were able to communicate with one another in a social context, which was a motivating factor.

Daniels (2004) and Englert, Manalo, and Zhao (2004) studied the motivational effects of computer technology on writing instruction and performance of elementary students and found that technology can help students' writing to improve. Both Daniels (2004) and Englert et al. (2004) reported that in using computer technology, students showed more enthusiasm and excitement to write, wrote longer pieces and more writing pieces in general, and showed increased success on assessments. Daniels (2004) examined the effects of using computer technology in preparation for state assessments for 5th grade students and found that after one year of preparation using computer technology, the percentage of students proficient on the state writing assessment increased from 16.7% to 54.3%. In addition, the percentage of students who were not proficient on the state writing assessment decreased drastically from 83.3% to 45.7% (Daniels, 2004). This shows marked improvement. Daniels (2004) reported that the students were more interested in studying and practicing their writing on the computer than on paper, and this in turn resulted in spending more time learning and valuing the time spent as well as increased test scores.

After interviewing elementary students and analyzing responses, Glewa and Bogan (2007), Simsek (2009), and Levin and Wadmany (2006) reported that most students had a favorable response for technology use, understanding its significance in the classroom and how technology can be used as a tool for reading and writing. Because students believe that technology is important in their own learning, they will be more motivated to work when they are able to use it.

Technology and Student Engagement

Using technology in the classroom is one way to engage students in their learning (Warshcauer, 2007; Lowther, Ross, & Morrison, 2003, Hackbarth, 2004; Baker, 2000). Student engagement is important for understanding and success in and out of the classroom. Both Warschauer (2007) and Lowther et al. (2003) examined one-to-one laptop classrooms or classrooms where each student is provided with a personal laptop computer for educational use. They were interested in examining the effects of providing intermediate elementary students with all-day access to laptops and how this affected their writing skills. Both Warschauer (2007) and Lowther et al. (2003) reported that using one-to-one laptops is beneficial in promoting literacy skills. Warschauer (2007) found that students learned to access information, manage it, and incorporate it into written and multimedia products, so the benefits are profound on students' computer and literacy skills. On the other hand, Lowther et al. (2003) found that in the students' writing pieces, ideas and content, organization, and style improved, so aspects of the students' writing were strengthened by working on an individual laptop computer every day. Warschauer (2007) and Lowther et al. (2003) argue that using technology such as this in the classroom helps to engage students in activities which in turn benefits their literacy learning and skills.

Baker (2000) studied how literacy and tool-based technologies can be integrated into an elementary classroom and found that it can happen successfully. In the study, 4th grade students worked on an inquiry-based project with a writing component using computers (Baker, 2000). Baker (2000) found that the computer provided valuable learning opportunities and gave students access to many sources of information. In

addition, the technology used in the project allowed for increased student engagement as students were directly involved in looking up information online and through a multimedia encyclopedia, editing their work on a word processor, and creating a final project through presentation software (Baker, 2000). Many different opportunities were created in this assignment, which allowed for accommodating multiple learning styles and personalities. Both Baker (2000) and Englert (2004) reported that when using technology in school, individual learning styles and knowledge gaps can be accommodated, which can lead to increased success and student engagement in the classroom. After interviewing the teacher, Baker (2000) concluded that the reason for student success was directly related to the level of engagement in the project, which was made possible through the technology resources available. On the contrary, Baker (2000) found that there were some challenges of using technology in the project, as some students needed more instruction on technology use and referencing skills than others at the onset (Baker, 2000). This affected the direction of her instruction in the beginning of the project.

Similarly, Hackbarth (2004) studied 4th graders' computer literacy skills as a function of access, gender, and race, and found that not all students come to school with the same proficiency or knowledge of technology and Internet access and usage and it is an important factor to consider when designing an appropriate technology plan for your classroom. Both Hackbarth (2004) and Baker (2000) argued that this could create a discrepancy in the classroom for teachers who want to bring technology into the classroom, as experience and access outside of school play a role in competence. However, Hackbarth (2004) reported that most students have an affection for using

technology regardless of access, gender, or race. Because students enjoy using technology, it is possible to use it with the appropriate accommodations to tap into different learning styles and personalities and increase student engagement.

Blogging and Authentic Experience

When students blog, they are engaging in an authentic writing activity (Baker, Rozendal, & Whitenack, 2009; Simsek, 2009; Read and Fisher, 2006; Larson, 2009; Glewa and Bogan, 2007). Authentic activities are purposeful in that they help students see the value of their learning experiences. Levin and Wadmany (2006) interviewed students about their views on learning with information technologies and found that students felt that authentic learning experiences were key to their success and understanding. According to Davis and McGrail (2009), when their audience is the whole world, students are motivated to be the best writers they can be. When writing on a blog, students automatically have an audience and it becomes an authentic writing experience.

Baker et al. (2009) conducted a study on audience awareness in a technology-rich classroom by examining a 4th grade class that completed an inquiry project involving a technology-based presentation. This was an authentic activity as students had an audience to discuss and share their findings. For the final presentation, students used various forms of technology as a medium and after sharing, took questions from their audience in an open discussion forum. After interviewing students in the class, Baker et al. (2009) found that most students felt they were motivated by having an audience and were encouraged to work harder on their projects and research. Baker et al. (2009) reported that "audience members' comments challenged authors to clarify their intended meanings and these

challenges operationalized feedback from an intended audience" (p. 412). In other words, the students challenged one another's thinking. Furthermore, Baker et al. (2009) found that the students' knowledge of having an audience during the project presentation affected their topic choice for the project as well as their quality of work. The students shared ideas with one another and collaborated during the process. Similarly, Read and Fisher (2006) and Simsek (2009) examined students' blogs and their perceptions on blogging and found that students work harder to write well on blogs because they have an audience. Baker et al. (2009), Read and Fisher (2006), and Simsek (2009) reported that when writers have a sense of audience it motivates them in their work. On the other hand, Baker et al. (2009) found that it is critical for writers to have a sense of audience in order for them to develop their composition and comprehension skills.

Read and Fisher (2006) and Davis and McGrail (2009) argued that when students have personal blogs, they have created and defined a sense of identity and individualism for themselves. This is important for self-esteem and also helps the students to see themselves as authors and writers serving an authentic purpose. Read and Fisher (2006) explain that students "make their mark upon the world, and leave their footprints on the sand of the Internet" (p. 5). As students grow as learners and individuals, their writings become stable artifacts of identity and accomplishment from a moment in time (Read & Fisher, 2006). Similarly, Larson (2009) studied 5th grade students who participated in a reading workshop online, through the use of electronic books and an online journal for responses and discussion with peers. The students were able to construct their own responses to the readings and post them online on their blogs. Larson (2009) found that the different prompts constructed by the students were authentic as they exercised the

students' own voices and allowed the students to have an identity in the classroom. Davis and McGrail (2009), Read and Fisher (2006), and Larson (2009) found that the blogs promoted a sense of identity in the students. It is evident that students' identities were able to come through in their blog writing, which was inherent to their success and enjoyment in the activities.

Glewa and Bogan's (2007) study showed how blogs can be used for authentic purposes by promoting children's literacy skills. They designed a project where students responded to a current event on a class blog, after a hurricane had hit their Florida town and devastated areas nearby. The elementary students were able to reflect on their experiences, discuss feelings, ask questions, and share similarities and differences that they had because of the natural disaster. The blog was an authentic way to get the students talking about a real event that they had all experienced by opening the doors for communication (Glewa & Bogan, 2007). Similarly, Read and Fisher (2006) found that when students kept a blog, they were able to keep a record of memories and events in their lives. Both Glewa and Bogan (2007) and Read and Fisher (2006) agreed that having a blog is one way to keep an archive or portfolio of students' experiences as documented through writing.

After examining classrooms where technology was being integrated and blogging is being used, Baker et al. (2009), Read and Fisher (2006), Larson (2009), and Glewa and Bogan (2007) found that authentic learning can take place. Because students are connected with an audience, able to discuss real issues, and can have a sense of identity, they are able to see the authentic purpose and value in the activities they are doing, which in turn promotes active learning, motivation, and enjoyment.

Blogging and Socially Constructed Learning

Davis and McGrail (2009), Cowan (2008), Larson (2009), and Read and Fisher (2006) found that blogging promotes socially constructed learning. Students can strongly benefit from social learning as they are able to collaborate with one another, share ideas, and ask questions to promote their understanding of concepts and materials. Learning is a social and collaborative process. According to Davis and McGrail (2009), blogs are designed for readers to leave comments, and they also can be linked to other blogs. These features encourage and promote social networking and community building (Davis & McGrail, 2009). Cowan (2008) studied the effects of developing and implementing a school-wide blog on student interaction and community. She used the blog as a common place for both students and teachers to discuss books and other topics (Cowan, 2008). Cowan (2008) found that the blog led to increased social interactions with students of different groups and grade levels as discussion occurred about literary works. In addition, the school-wide blog helped to create a sense of community and connection between teachers and students. Both Davis and McGrail (2009) and Cowan (2008) argue that blogging can spark conversation and build a learning community.

Similarly, Larson (2009) studied how reader response can be transformed using the New Literacies such as blogging and online learning communities. In the 5th grade class that was examined, students read e-books on laptops and responded to the literature in electronic journals. Larson (2009) found that socially constructed learning was promoted through the increased student engagement initiated by the activity. Both Larson (2009) and Cowan (2008) allowed the students to construct their own prompts on the blog by thinking of questions to pose or ideas to discuss with peers. The student-

constructed prompts promoted independence and responsibility in the activity. Larson (2009) and Cowan (2008) reported that the student-constructed prompts were helpful in motivating the students, and as a result, the learning that took place was student-directed and socially based. On the other hand, Larson (2009) found that some students needed guidance in learning about literacy from one another, as social learning does not come naturally to all students. As the New Literacies become increasingly dependent on social learning strategies, it is important to consider that socially-skilled learners will be at an advantage, while more independent learners may struggle and need more help along the way (Larson, 2009).

After studying six students' personal blogs, Read and Fisher (2006) found that blogging is done for social purposes. Each of the six students reported that the reason they choose to blog is to communicate with others, and get feedback and comments from peers on occurrences in their daily lives (Read & Fisher, 2006). This interest can be used in the classroom when students have the opportunity to do their writing on a blog and edit and critique each other's work online. According to Read and Fisher (2006), getting response from peers in response groups created by blogs give students a faster turnaround and validation from their social equals, which is especially helpful for students' confidence and understanding of feedback. Students need to develop relationships with one another, and using a blog is one way to promote this desire for relationships within the class, especially from peers outside of the close-knit social circle. Similarly, Glewa and Bogan (2007) found that using a blog in the classroom makes learning a social process, which is beneficial for all. Both Glewa and Bogan (2007) and Read and Fisher (2006) reported that the schools play a role in determining how to design learning to best

meet the needs of their students, and using a blog is one way to promote literacy skills with digital fluency and social learning.

After examining student blogs and interviewing students, Read and Fisher (2006), Cowan (2008), Glewa and Bogan (2007), and Larson (2009) found that blogging promotes socially constructed learning and sparks conversation between students which can be related back to school or academic purposes.

Conclusion

A common theme found in all of these areas is that blogging and technology use can be beneficial for student learning by promoting literacy skills while being interesting for students. Using this background knowledge about student blogging and technology use in the classroom has informed my own practice and how I will set up my research to examine these areas.

Methods

Context

Research for this study occurred in a suburban school district outside of Rochester, New York. Caring Community, where this study took place, is an intermediate elementary school that housed 794 students in grades three, four, and five for the 2009-2010 school year. Demographically, the student body was 90% Caucasian, with 11% qualifying for free and reduced lunch for the 2008-2009 school year. The classroom I worked in was a 4th grade class of 23 students. It was an integrated classroom, with 10 identified special education students who were pulled out daily for mathematics and

language arts instruction. The class was co-taught by a general education teacher and a special education teacher.

Participants

Teachers. In this study, I interviewed and observed both the general education teacher and the special education teacher. The general education teacher, Mr. Creative, has been teaching for seven years at Caring Community. This is his fifth year teaching in an integrated classroom and third year using blogging with his students. His certifications include Elementary Education and Special Education. Mr. Creative has been selected by the school district as a leader in technology use and integration because of his focus on education technology initiatives.

The special education teacher, Mr. Savvy, has been teaching at Caring Community for one year and seven years in the school district. This is his sixth year teaching special education and fourth year using blogging with his students. His certifications include Elementary Education and Special Education, Computing in Education, and Administration. Mr. Savvy also exhibits a strong interest in technology use in education and helping students with disabilities succeed. In addition, he was named the 2006 and 2007 Leader of the Year by *Technology and Learning Magazine* for his work with educational technology initiatives.

Students. Five students from this 4th grade classroom participated in this research study. The students were selected by their classroom teachers and represent a range of skill levels and learning styles within the class. The students were all between nine and ten years old and have been using blogs in this 4th grade classroom with their teachers for

the entire school year. Three of the participants are female and the remaining two are male. Pseudonyms were assigned to each student.

Reader is a bright student who reads well above grade level. Reader enjoys writing stories, reading mystery books, and playing sports outside of school. Gamer is an average student who prefers reading to writing. Gamer was born in Ukraine and moved to the United States at age four. He can speak some Ukrainian. Lax is a below average student who likes to play lacrosse and enjoys being outside. Lax prefers writing to reading, and enjoys typing on the computer. Writer is an average student who plays soccer and likes writing. Writer does not enjoy reading. Athlete is an above average student who enjoys going to friends' houses, playing softball, and other sports.

Researcher Stance

As a researcher, I worked as a passive observer in the classroom. According to Mills (2007), taking on the role of a passive observer involves relinquishing any responsibilities for teaching and focusing only on data collection. This allows for the teacher to watch students in a different setting, through a different lens. I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College. I am working on obtaining a Master's Degree in Literacy Education and have a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and English. I presently have certifications in Early Childhood Education and Childhood Education.

Method

In this action research study, I looked to find out how blogging in the classroom benefits elementary students. In addition, I was interested in learning how elementary students feel about blogging in school. To begin the data collection, I passively observed

blogging in the classroom for one hour. During a scheduled "technology block," laptop

computers were brought into the classroom and each student was given time to blog. This

classroom had a teacher-created blog where class news and announcements were posted,

and off the class blog were individual student blogs, listed by pseudonym (to protect the

students' identities). When it was time to blog, students accessed their individual blogs

and responded and reflected during the technology block. Typically, blog posts were

prompted by the teacher; however, students sometimes had free choice in their posting.

They were also encouraged to use the blog at home and write about anything of interest.

On the day I observed, students responded to a given prompt about the "Top Ten

Highlights" of the school year. During my observation, I examined how the technology

block worked, how the teacher introduced the topic and supported students during this

time, and how the students worked independently, navigated on their computers, and

blogged.

In addition, I formally interviewed the five participants one-on-one in a private

location. The interviews consisted of ten questions and lasted approximately ten minutes

each (see Appendix A). In the interviews, I asked the students questions about how they

felt about blogging, how and if they think it has helped them, how it has affected their

motivation towards writing, and what they have learned from this experience. I also

formally interviewed both the general education teacher and the special education teacher

separately by email. The teacher interviews consisted of eight questions (see Appendix

B). In the interviews, I asked the teachers about their experiences using blogging, what

kinds of things they have found or noticed through implementation of this project, how

technology use has benefitted their students, and information about their experiences teaching in a technology-rich classroom.

The final piece of my research included an examination of student artifacts, which were the participating students' blogs. The students' blogs were available off of the classroom website which was accessible to the public on the Internet. Each student had an individual blog, which contained blog posts from the beginning of the school year up until the end of the year. I created a rubric to use when examining the blogs, to direct my focus on specific aspects of the students' writing (see Appendix C). The rubric included the following aspects of writing to be assessed: ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. For each participant, I selected a blog post from the beginning of the school year and one from the end of the school year to assess on the rubric and compare findings. I did this to determine if there was growth and improvement over time. I also assigned each student a pseudonym separate from the pseudonym used for the class blog, so no one would know whose blog was whose. This was a way to additionally protect the students' identities.

Quality and Credibility of Research

In doing this research it was important to ensure the quality and credibility of the study. According to Mills (2007), credibility is the researcher's ability to consider the complexities that may come about in a study and to deal with patterns not easily explained. To help ensure credibility during this study, I applied certain methods. I practiced triangulation with this study. Mills (2007) defines triangulation as comparing a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to cross-check the

data. I collected information using multiple approaches, such as observation, student

interviews, teacher interviews, and examination of artifacts. I also had artifacts and

samples of student work from the student blogs to show progress and improvement. I

made sure to examine different blog posts, compare and analyze them, and make

assessments using a rubric.

I also ensured transferability in my research. Mills (2007) defines transferability

as researchers' beliefs that everything they study is context bound and not to develop

statements that can generalize a group of people. In my study, I collected detailed and

descriptive data that was specific to the study. This allowed for comparisons to be made

among different contexts. It is also important to ensure dependability in data collection,

which Mills (2007) defines as the stability of the data. With dependability, I made sure to

use a triangulation process, by using several methods of data collection during my

research. Another strategy to help ensure dependability is through the use of an "audit

trail,"(p. 105) which, according to Mills (2007), refers to having an external auditor

examine the processes of data collection during the study. During this study, I worked

with a critical colleague who examined the process of my data collection, analysis, and

interpretation. My critical colleague and I communicated weekly to discuss feedback and

comments providing insight to my research.

Finally, it is important to use confirmability of the data during a study. According

to Mills (2007), confirmability refers to the neutrality or objectivity of the data that has

been collected. In my study, I ensured confirmability during my research by using the

triangulation process, which, as previously stated, involves implementing a variety of

methods into the study. I compared the variety of data sources and different methods that I used to cross-check the data.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants

Before beginning my data collection, I needed to collect informed consent and protect the rights of the participants. In this study, I worked with five participating students and two teachers. I provided each of the students with an assent form that discussed the study and asked for their signature to confirm authorization to perform my research. In addition, I also gave their parents a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and asked for their permission and signature, allowing me to work with their children. All parents knew that, for this study, all names were changed to pseudonyms to protect anonymity and that identifying marks were removed from all the artifacts used during the study. Confidentiality was also guaranteed to protect the rights of the students.

Data Collection

As previously mentioned, there were multiple forms of data collected in this study. I performed passive observation for one hour in the classroom to see the students blog during the technology block period. In observing the blogging period, I was able to see how it was introduced by the teachers, how the teachers supported the students during this time, and how the students worked independently, navigating on the Internet and on their blogs. In addition, during the observation period I took extensive field notes on everything I saw and noticed. I also conducted formal interviews with five students from the classroom, selected by the teacher, that represented a range of ability levels. Each student was interviewed one time, in a one-to-one session lasting approximately ten

minutes each. The interview questions addressed the students' perceptions of blogging. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition, I interviewed both the general education and special education teachers separately through email to find out their perceptions of using blogging with their students. Lastly, I examined the blog posts from the five participating students, available off the classroom website. I used a rubric to assess different aspects of the students' writing in the blog posts to find out if there was improvement and growth over the course of the school year.

Data Analysis

Multiple steps were taken to analyze the data I collected from my research. First, after my visit to the classroom for observation, I typed up my handwritten field notes on my computer. After conducting the student interviews at the school, I listened to the audio recordings and typed up transcriptions of what was said and discussed for each interview on my computer. I conducted the teacher interviews by email, so I printed out the email responses from the teachers, which served as transcriptions for my research.

The next step I took in analyzing data was to examine the student blog posts. I accessed the classroom blog on the Internet and explored the site and student blogs to begin and gather additional background information, as well as to familiarize myself with the site. Then, I examined the five participating students' blogs in depth, focusing on one post from the fall and one post from the spring for each student. Because the blog entries varied by student, I tried to select entries that were similar in length and type, such as a response to reading or a free post. I then created a rubric using five aspects of writing:

voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and ideas. I assessed each blog post on the rubric, so there was a score for each blog entry for each student.

Once I had collected all my data, I began to organize it by general category. I read through the field notes and interviews several times, and laid out all the rubrics on a table to see my findings. I typed up a Word document separated into sections by type of data, for example, teacher interviews, student interviews, and blog post analysis. Then for each, I listed all the common categories found in that data type based on my re-readings and recorded the frequency for that category so I could see which categories were most apparent in my data collection. In this, I was able to see the bigger picture and pick out the main themes that revealed itself in my data collection. Once I was able to identify the main themes of my data ("Motivation," "Authenticity," and "Strengthening of Writing Skills"), I looked through to find salient quotes from the interviews or observations I wrote down in my field notes to support each theme. This method of organization helped me to keep track of the evidence I would include in my final paper.

Findings and Discussion

After careful examination and analysis of the data collected throughout my research, a few themes emerged. These themes were found consistently throughout the data and demonstrate the benefits of blogging in the elementary classroom. The themes include the following: increased motivation, strengthening of writing skills, and authenticity.

Increased Motivation

The first major theme that emerged from my research was that using blogging in the classroom results in increased motivation for students. This theme was evident throughout several aspects of my research, appearing in both the teacher and student interviews, as well as in classroom observation. Increased motivation due to the use of technology in the classroom is one topic that I discovered during my review of literature, found in Read and Fisher's (2006) study, Levin and Wadmany's (2006) study, and Guha's (2003) study. The idea of using technology to increase student motivation seemed to continuously appear in my review of current research on the topic of blogging in the elementary classroom. This idea was certainly evident in my own research on the topic.

When I observed the classroom during the blogging period, the students appeared to be engaged in their work and were quiet and focused. I have worked as a substitute teacher in this classroom before and have seen that the students can be quite loud and silly at times. Once the teachers brought the laptop carts into the classroom and blogging time began, the students retreated to their seats, got down to work, and remained fairly quiet and engaged for the entire time I was there. There were a few conversations amongst students as some were asked to help others on some technical aspects of the blog, but most students worked quietly and with focus. This observation led me to believe that the students were motivated to blog and could get down to work with very little interruption.

After interviewing the teachers, it was clear to me that both Mr. Creative and Mr. Savvy believed there were several benefits of using blogging with their students. According to Mr. Creative, "The blog gives students a voice and a podium. Many students took advantage of the freedom to post about what they think about things we are

learning, share opinions about books, movies, etc. Students were not only motivated to

write (unassigned), but they were also forming their opinions and formulating arguments

to back those opinions" (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). The students were able and

encouraged to log on to the blog anytime, anywhere, to just write. Students were,

according to Mr. Creative, "practicing writing without even knowing it. They were

sharing the events of their lives in a narrative and often very descriptive form" (Teacher

interview, July 7, 2010).

In addition, Mr. Creative argued that "technology also gives us an opportunity to

push students who we think need to be challenged. They are able to free post on their

blogs, write on our class wiki, and publish other types of works that are optional and not

assigned to the other students" (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). This outlet for

additional opportunity through the venue of technology is motivating to those students

who need enrichment. Mr. Savvy revealed that the use of technology in the classroom

"encourages participation better than any other method" (Teacher interview, July 8,

2010). The active participation that comes from use of a blog shows how truly motivating

it is for the students in this classroom. Mr. Savvy asserts, "Blogging allows them to take

ownership over what they write and what they want to write about" (Teacher interview,

July 8, 2010). In this classroom, blogging gives students responsibility and ownership in

their writing. Both Guha (2003) and Levin and Wadmany (2006) argued that teachers

play a large role in determining technology use in schools and how it is integrated into

the classroom. It is clear that in their classroom, Mr. Creative and Mr. Savvy have

designed this project with their students in mind, allowing them to take ownership over

their writing and pushing them to think critically. It was evident to me after interviewing

the teachers that they felt that using blogging with their students has resulted in increased

motivation over the course of the school year, and this is due in a large part to the design

of the project and opportunities the students are given.

In addition, after interviewing five students in the classroom, an aspect that stood

out to me was that the students themselves felt motivated by the blogging project

implemented in their classroom. All five students reported that they liked using blogging

in school. In a study done on student interest in technology, Hackbarth (2004) found that

most students have an affection for technology use, regardless of background. Both

Reader and Writer said they liked blogging because of the good ideas that came from

doing it in class through their teachers. Reader additionally reported that she enjoyed

blogging so much, she participated and blogged from home. She explained, "Ever since I

started using it I've been really getting into it. Like I really like it. I do it at home a lot too

whenever I have a special event that I've participated in or whenever something really

cool happens to me I always do a blog*"* (Student interview, June 16, 2010). Gamer also

used the blog at home occasionally, sharing, "Sometimes I've wrote a couple posts"

(Student interview, June 16, 2010). Gamer and Lax reported that blogging is fun and Lax

enjoyed "checking on my blog" (Student interview, June 17, 2010). Lax also reported

that he had blogged at home for fun a few times (Student interview, June 17, 2010). It is

evident to me that the students find aspects of the blogging activity to be enjoyable as

many of them blog in their free time at home and outside of school. This also supports

Mr. Creative's assertions about the motivational effects of the classroom blog. Glewa and

Bogan (2007) reported that using technology as the medium for discussion and writing

enhances literacy projects as it motivates students to respond, reflect, and share their

ideas and feelings. The interviews demonstrate that because students enjoy blogging and are excited to participate in addition to what is required of them, their motivation is increased.

Authenticity

Another theme that arose from my research was that when students write on a blog, they are engaging in an authentic learning experience. This was also something that had appeared consistently when reviewing current research and literature on the topic. Levin and Wadmany (2006) argue that authentic learning experiences are the key to students' successes and understandings. After doing my own research on my topic, I was able to come to the same conclusions about how blogging promotes authenticity in student learning.

Areas of my research where authenticity stood out as a major theme were found in the teacher and student interviews that I conducted. Both Mr. Creative and Mr. Savvy believed that one of the major benefits of blogging with elementary students is that it gives them an authentic audience. According to Mr. Savvy, "Through blogging, they [the students] are aware that others will view their writing" (Teacher interview, July 8, 2010). By having an audience, students are able to use their voice as a form of expression. Mr. Creative discussed how blogging has changed school-based writing. He reported, "Prior to using the blog, student work that was submitted might be viewed by the student, myself and parents. Now with work being published on the web it is essentially visible to the world" (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). Because the teachers allow their blog to be publicly visible, people from all over the world can essentially view the students'

postings. Mr. Creative explains that this is "powerful and motivating" for the students (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010), as he has had viewers from Florida, California, Thailand, and Germany visit the class blog. According to Davis and McGrail (2009), students are motivated to be the best writers they can be when their audience is the whole world. When asked to respond to having viewers from distant places, Athlete says, "I feel pretty impressed that people worldwide are taking their time and going on our blog" (Student interview, June 17, 2010). This shows that the students recognized the stance they took as bloggers who have a real audience and serve an authentic purpose.

In addition to having the world as their audience, students also have each other in the classroom as their audience. In this classroom, each student's blog was accessible to one another, and students were encouraged to visit each other's blogs to comment and interact with their peers. Mr. Creative explained that this created a community of learners in the classroom. He argued, "The blog (in addition to a lot of team building work in the classroom) helped solidify us as a cohesive group, where everyone (and everyone's opinions) are important within such a diverse group of learners" (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). He also believed that the collaboration that occurred in the classroom was "self-motivated" by the students (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). Both Mr. Creative and Mr. Savvy argued that they made the blog accessible to everyone but they "did not force students to read each others work or comment, they did that naturally" (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). This shows that the students were aware of having an audience as a classroom blogger, and took advantage of the opportunity to share their ideas through viewing one another's work and commenting appropriately. In a study on audience awareness in a technology-rich classroom, Baker, Rozendal, & Whitenack,

2009 found that students felt motivated by having an audience and were consequently encouraged to work harder on their projects and research in the classroom. Similarly, audience awareness occurred as a result of the blogging project that occurred in this classroom, because the students were aware that others would be viewing their writing, whether it was a peer within the classroom or someone worldwide. Writing on the blog served a real purpose and was intended for a true audience.

In interviewing the students, I could see that not only were they aware of having an audience, but they seemed to enjoy it as well. When asked why they would prefer to write on a blog than on paper, two of the students responded that they like having an audience to read their work. Reader explains, "I would rather write on a blog because I'd like everyone to see like what I've been doing and all the writing that we've been doing, and kind of just getting an idea of what kind of a person I am" (Student interview, June 16, 2010). All five students reported that they communicated with other students on the blog, either by commenting or making connections about things that their peers have posted. The students seemed to view blogging as a social activity that allowed them to connect with their peers. Without even realizing it, the students are participating in an authentic learning experience. In addition, students do this type of activity at home regularly, by socializing and communicating with peers on the Internet through forums such as Facebook, instant messaging, Skype, and email. In the student interviews, all five of the students shared what seemed like an endless list of technologies they use at home on a regular basis (Student interviews, June 16 and 17, 2010). Reader reported, "I use a lot of technology in my house" (Student interview, June 16, 2010). Zawilinski (2009) argued that many students develop proficient computer tool use at home, on the Internet,

through instant messenger, blogs, and other online tools. Blogging in the classroom is a

way to bring an out-of-school literacy into school and it is authentic as it is something

similar to what children this age would normally do.

Writing Skills Strengthened

The final theme that revealed itself in my research was that writing skills are

strengthened through the use of a blog in the elementary classroom. This was found in the

teacher and student interviews, but most importantly, it was demonstrated when

analyzing and assessing blog posts on a rubric (see Appendix C). Two major aspects of

writing improved over the course of the school year as per analysis of student blog

samples, those being *word choice* and *sentence fluency*.

Two samples of blog postings for each of the five selected students were assessed

using the rubric I devised. I assessed one sample from the fall and one sample from the

spring for each student, in order to make a comparison between the two and determine

possible growth or improvement (Table 1).

Table 1. Student Blog Assessments (Fall & Spring)

	IDEAS		VOICE		WORD CHOICE		SENTENCE FLUENCY		CONVENTIONS	
	Fall	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*
Reader	3	3	2.5	3	2.5	3	2	3	3	3
Writer	2	2.5	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2

Lax	2	2	2	2	1.5	2	1	1.5	1	2
Gamer	1.5	2	2	1.5	1	1	2	2	2	2
Athlete	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Because students are given free choice as well as assigned topics in class, there was much variety in the postings so the samples of blog posts that I selected were on different topics for each student. I tried to choose posts that were similar in length and style. The aspects of writing assessed on the rubric were *Ideas, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency,* and *Conventions*. These aspects of writing were assessed on a 3-point scale, with 1 being the lowest score and 3 being the highest score.

In my analysis, I found that *word choice* and *sentence fluency* were the two aspects in which there was notable improvement seen from fall to spring. Notable meaning that more than one student demonstrated growth in these areas. Of all the areas assessed, those two categories had more than one student demonstrate improvement so they stood out as overall areas of improvement (Table 2).

Table 2. Improvements by Writing Aspect

Blog Assessments

Improvements from Fall – Spring:

Writing Aspect:	Students:
Ideas	Writer
Voice	Reader
Word Choice	**Reader, Lax**
Sentence Fluency	**Reader, Lax**
Conventions	Lax

In each of the other three categories, only one student demonstrated growth. In summary, the students showed improvement in all areas, but the two areas

that stood out were *word choice* and *sentence fluency* (see Tables 1 and 2).

　　　　Word choice refers to the type of words used in writing. A score of "3" in *word choice* would mean that the writing contained powerful and engaging words and meaningful language that help to paint a picture of what was written. *Sentence fluency* refers to the flow and rhythm of sentences. A score of "3" in *sentence fluency* would mean that the sentences invited expressive reading and were strong and varied. In addition, I found that the category of *ideas* was one that remained stagnant throughout the year, with most students staying exactly the same in their scores. *Word choice* and *sentence fluency*, however, were the two aspects of writing with marked improvement for most students. To analyze the blog posts, I assessed each post using each of these five aspects of writing. Each post was given a score in each category. In this way, I was able to compare how the different aspects of writing changed from the fall to the spring (see Table 1 and Appendix C). This analysis demonstrates that students' writing skills do improve by using a blog in the elementary classroom, as evident in my research. This is consistent with findings reported by Daniels (2004), who argued that students' writing can improve through the use of technology.

　　　　In addition, both the teacher interviews and student interviews revealed that writing skills is an area that is strengthened through use of a blog in the elementary classroom. When asked what skills are targeted with this implementation, both Mr. Creative and Mr. Savvy reported that writing in particular is a target skill for blogging (Teacher interview, July 7 and 8, 2010). According to Mr. Creative, the specific skills strengthened by this activity included the following: "writing narratives, persuasive and descriptive writing, forming opinions and backing with reasons, organization and

sequencing, paragraphing, conventions, questioning and reasoning, computer skills, and typing" (Teacher interview, July 7, 2010). It is clear that he believed that the use of blogging has a variety of benefits for students' writing. Mr. Savvy, on the other hand, believed that other writing skills such as "voice, sense of purpose, and dedication to the writing process" (Teacher interview, July 8, 2010) are strengthened through blogging. He also reported, "Expression comes through commenting. If a student is not receiving a lot of comments, they start to wonder why? They look into whether or not they are writing interesting pieces and try to generate more traffic with more interesting topics and word choice" (Teacher interview, July 8, 2010). Both teachers agreed that the blogs opened up opportunities for their students' writing to improve in many different ways. Recent research conducted by Englert, Manalo, and Zhao (2004) showed that technology use can help students' writing to improve over time. Integrating technology into the classroom can be done through blogging and the opportunities for writing improvement are endless.

When the students were asked if they felt their writing improved through blogging over the course of the school year, all students responded that they believed it was improved in some aspect. Both Athlete and Writer expressed that they felt that the collaboration and sharing of ideas helped them in their writing: "You can see what other people do and it gives you ideas" (Student interview, June 17, 2010). Lax felt that his writing conventions and mechanics, such as "punctuation and stuff" (Student interview, June 17, 2010) improved by blogging. Gamer believed that he has "had some good ideas that came from the blog" (Student interview, June 16, 2010), and Reader expressed that the length of her writing pieces improved (Student interview, June 16, 2010). Reader argued, "I've become a better writer because last year I wasn't all that great in writing

and now this year everyone thinks I'm fantastic in writing. I've written a bunch about

family and stuff like that that have been at least four paragraphs long" (Student interview,

June 16, 2010). It is clear to me that the students see they have learned and improved in

some aspect from blogging. According to Daniels (2004), when using technology,

students show more enthusiasm and excitement to write, write longer pieces and more

writing pieces in general, and show increased success on assessments. Technology is a

forum for student writing that offers students the opportunity to grow academically

beyond traditional paper and pencil bound writing. Because my data proves that aspects

of students' writing will improve through blogging, it is clear that technology use such as

this can be relied upon and assessed for growth and improvement.

Implications

The findings of my research suggest several implications for me as a teacher.

First, it is clear that blogging in the classroom can be beneficial for elementary students

in a variety of ways, which has proven to me that implementing a blogging project in an

elementary classroom would be worthwhile, effective, and meaningful for students. My

ultimate goal as an educator is to put my students first. I want to make sure that I am

researched in the approaches, strategies, and methods I use to teach my students, so as to

best meet their needs. My findings demonstrate to me that the use of a classroom blog

would most certainly be a valuable asset to my classroom and curriculum. Something I

will do in my own classroom is allow students choice in blog entries. As Read and Fisher

(2006) argue, it is possible to make school writing more like self-sponsored writing by

giving students the opportunity to write for their own purposes. I have learned in my

research, interviews, and examination of student blogs that this allows an opportunity for students to write for authentic purposes that are relevant and meaningful to them.

A second implication of my research is that the use of a classroom blog is motivating for elementary students. As both the literature and my findings suggest, when students are motivated in the classroom, their excitement and engagement in their learning will increase (Daniels, 2004; Englert, Manalo, and Zhao, 2004). If I hope to motivate my students in the classroom, I need to create opportunities for them that they will enjoy and find engaging as the recent research states. One way I will do this in my own classroom is to encourage students to use the blog to communicate with their peers. Through student interviews, classroom observation, and recent research on the topic, I learned that students enjoy using a classroom blog because they are able to communicate with one another in a social context. Read and Fisher (2006) state that students choose to blog for communicative purposes. All five of the students that I interviewed reported that they enjoyed communicating with others on the blog over the course of the school year and did so regularly. In addition, Mr. Creative argued that blogging created a sense of community within the classroom. I believe that it is important for teachers to create authentic experiences such as this to create engaged and meaningful learning. This type of learning will increase student motivation.

A third implication of my research is that students' writing skills can improve through the use of a blog over the course of a school year. My findings show that certain aspects of students' writing skills improved from the fall to the spring. This information is important to me as a teacher because it reaffirms that blogging is not only fun and engaging for students to do, but it does help to strengthen students' traditional writing

skills that would typically be assessed in the classroom, as well as on state tests and grade level standards. It is important to recognize that testing is significant right now and students are held to high standards on these assessments. What is done in the classroom must be authentic and enriching and prepare students for these tests. As a teacher, I want to make sure that what I am teaching will ultimately help to increase my students' knowledge and therefore improve their skill levels in the academic areas. As the research states (Warschauer, 2007; Lowther, Ross, & Morrison, 2003), using one-to-one laptops in the classroom promotes computer and literacy skills, as well as aspects of students' writing. After completing my own research on the topic, I see how aspects of writing can improve over time through use of a blog on one-to-one laptops.

In my own classroom, I will teach supplemental mini-lessons first and allow students ample time to practice independently on their blogs. Through observation and interviews, I learned that the classroom teachers incorporated skill-based lessons into the technology block period, allowing the students to see a model first and then practice independently. The continuous practice on writing skills led to improvement and growth, as evidenced by my analysis.

Given what I have learned from recent literature such as Warschauer's (2007) study and Read and Fisher's (2006) study, as well as aspects of New Literacy Studies theory and my own research on the topic, I will be certain to create opportunities for learning in my own classroom that promote authenticity, social-based learning, engagement, and room for strengthening of writing and literacy skills. It is critical that I, as well as other teachers, recognize how to strengthen student writing skills in meaningful, authentic, and technology-rich ways such as through a blog.

After considering all of the implications of my research and findings, I am left with a few additional unanswered questions that my research brings to mind, for myself and other teachers. How can blogging be adapted to meet the needs of primary students, as well as intermediate elementary students? For my study, I researched a 4th grade upper elementary classroom that used blogging over the course of a school year. I was able to see how blogging was used to meet the needs of and benefit nine and ten year old students. Typing reflective and responsive blog entries on a computer as I have seen may be above the appropriate level of younger children. I am left wondering how blogging could be used in a primary classroom, with students who are perhaps six to eight years old. What can teachers do to bring in technology to the classroom, such as a classroom blog, that would be appropriate for primary elementary students?

Conclusion

Blogging in the classroom is highly beneficial for elementary students. Its results include increased motivation, authentic learning, and strengthening of writing skills. If teachers want to engage their students in a meaningful learning activity, then a student blog is a positive way to create this experience. Teachers must motivate their students by creating authentic and purposeful learning activities that involve student engagement, communication and collaboration with one another, and technology-rich experiences that bring out of school literacies into the classroom.

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Appendix A

Student Interview Questions

1. Do you like blogging in school? Why?

2. Have you used a blog before this year?

3. What types of technologies do you use at home?

4. Have you ever felt confused or found blogging to be difficult?

5. Do you use the blog at home/when you're not required to in school?

6. Would you prefer to write in a journal on paper or on a blog?

7. Do you communicate with other students on the blog?

8. What do you feel you have learned from blogging?

9. Do you feel like blogging has helped your writing?

10. Do you like having free choice to write on the blog or a topic from Mr. Wood?

Appendix B

Teacher Interview Questions

1. What do you see as benefits of blogging in the classroom? Particularly with elementary students?

2. What particular skills are strengthened?

3. How does technology use in the classroom benefit students?

4. What are the difficulties/limitations of using blogging with your class?

5. How do you approach students who come in with different backgrounds in terms of technology use/computer experience/Internet savvy?

6. Is this something you could do without laptops available in your school?

7. Are there ways to differentiate among students, and if so, how do you do it?

8. What aspects of writing do you think can improve through the use of a blog?

Appendix C

<u>BLOG ANALYSIS RUBRIC</u>

Student Name:

Circle: FALL or SPRING

	1 Beginning	2 Target	3 Excellent
Ideas	-Lacks focus/does not stay on topic -Few details -Vague -Disconnected thoughts	-Stays on topic -Attempt at supporting details -Content is clear -Reader may still be left with some questions	-Stays on topic and is focused -Relevant, accurate details -Many details -Shows connections/insight -Goes beyond the obvious
Voice	-Little connection with/awareness of audience -Lifeless and mechanical -Sits on the surface	-Reader/writer connection -Awareness of audience is present -Energy level is inconsistent	-Effective and strong reader/writer connection -Awareness of audience is present and strong -Takes risks -Reflects interest in and commitment to topic
Word Choice	-Limited vocabulary -Simple words -Functional language -Words may be used incorrectly -Descriptive words not used	-Moments of sparkle at times, but not consistent -Words used enhance the meaning -Figurative language is used	-Powerful and engaging words are used -Wording is accurate -Language creates meaningful pictures through descriptive words
Sentence Fluency	-Choppy or incomplete sentences -Phrases rather than sentences -Oral reading may be difficult at times -Repetitive beginnings	-Sentences are more mechanical than fluid -Variation with beginnings -Can be read aloud easily	-Flow and rhythm -Strong and varied sentences -Invites expressive reading -Sentence structure enhances meaning
Conventions	-Spelling errors -Some incorrect punctuation -Grammar errors -Irregular paragraphing	-Spelling is generally correct -Punctuation and capitalization usually correct -Grammar correct -Paragraphing correct	-Spelling correct, even on difficult words -Accurate punctuation and capitalization -Grammar and usage contributes to clarity