PPS Blog Guidelines

I.   What is a Blog?

A blog is a special type of Web page—an online journal—with unique characteristics that set it apart from regular Web pages. Blogs are made up of multiple journal entries listed in reverse chronological order that invariably include a title, a date, and time stamp. Each blog entry also will have its own Permalink (a unique Web address) and sometimes a Trackback (an automatic entry that appears in your blog to tell you that somebody has written about your entry, and linked to it), a Category, and Comments.

Comments are one of the things that make blogs unique and special. Anybody who reads a blog may, if the blog owner allows it, publish comments under a blog entry to agree, to disagree, to sympathize, or to share their own thoughts. This interaction is different than more traditional feedback utilities such as Guestbooks. Guestbooks are generic—entries are not tied to one particular page, or commentary. Blog comments, on the other hand, are tied directly to a particular entry.

While a typical webpage contains information, it is often a static page that is only updated every now and then. Bloggers can add static pages to their blogs as well. For a teacher a static page may be added to post reminders of class rules, grading rubrics, or other classroom resources. While posting homework or other classroom resources is not the purpose of the blog, it can be a good addition to this instructional activity.

Reference:: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/community/columns/blogging.mspx

A.   Instructional blogs

Instructional blogs are blogs that teachers use in the course of teaching their students. Typically these blogs are created by the teacher for practice of an instructional skill. Some examples include:

- A French teacher might use a blog for students to practice communicating in French. Students might be asked to respond to or translate a passage and post it on the blog. Students could be given writing prompts and be required to respond in French on the blog.
- A science teacher might use a blog for students to discuss the real world application of a theory "discovered" during a lab assignment. Students might be required to post their findings and comment on the conclusions drawn by another student.
- A reading teacher might use a blog as a virtual book circle. Students would respond to a passage they read including their assessment of the main character or a prediction of the next segment in the plot. Students could respond to each others postings by asking questions to draw out the reasoning behind conclusions that were drawn.
- A history teacher uses his blog to share information with his students to assist them with research projects that they are working on. As he comes across a resource that they

- An English teacher uses his blog to publish an online newsletter with his students. Students take turns writing articles for the various columns. The newsletter is published monthly.
- A journalism teacher uses a blog as a class portfolio. Samples of student assignments are published on the blog as each assignment is completed. In each post, the teacher explains why the particular piece was chosen. Commentary on the pieces range from remarks on style to topic.
- An art teacher could use a blog as a virtual portfolio. He could post information about an artist or style that students are studying and samples of student work completed during the unit.
- A teacher might set up a blog for students to use to review content area vocabulary. Students added as contributors to the blog could prepare entries for assigned vocabulary words that include definitions, example sentences, and visual media that help to explain the word, phrase, or concept.

In addition to the dynamic portion of the blog (the content that changes frequently) many blogs include pages that do not change. These portions can be a list of links or resources that students may need to refer to, a page about the teacher that explains how parents might make contact, or a calendar listing important events.

1. Guidelines

The school division has provided the http://ppsblogs.net domain for teachers who wish to establish instructional blogs. As blogs found on the http://ppsblogs.net domain can be easily identified by parents as official blogs established for the use of Portsmouth Public Schools, teachers should not create instructional blogs using other services. Teachers may apply for a blog on the ppsblogs.net domain using the application attached. Blogs will be approved for those teachers who submit a plan that follows best practices for instruction and student online privacy protection.

Instructional blogs are seen as a virtual extension of a teacher's classroom. Teachers are expected to set expectations for student behavior and put into effect a system to encourage students to use appropriate 'net etiquette' when expressing themselves on a blog. **In addition, teachers are required to moderate all comments submitted to their blog** and will have to determine if they will allow individuals outside of the PPS organization to post comments. Comment moderation will ensure that inappropriate comments are not posted to instructional blogs.

Instructional blogs that are inactive for 9 weeks during the school year will be deactivated and archived. The primary purpose for classroom blogging in Portsmouth Public Schools is interactivity by students on curricular issues, therefore blogs that have inappropriate and/or non-instructional postings on the blog for more than four weeks will be deleted. Examples of non-instructional posting would include posts that do not invite student interaction, such as:

- Homework for today is …
- Please remember to bring in your permission slips/report cards/progress reports.
- Here are the class notes for today…
- Student post: This weekend I found a new game to play…

2. Suggestions

While student/parent signature of the PPS Acceptable Use Policy governs student behavior on blogs, teachers who wish to establish instructional blogs on the http://ppsblogs.net/ community will follow the guidelines below:

A.   Rules –A class discussion of rules will help to establish class ownership of the blog as an instructional space. Students are less prone to post inappropriately to the blog if they feel a sense of collective ownership. Minimally blog rules should be the same as the rules in your classroom. Many teachers have found it beneficial to add additional rules that include appropriate internet safety guidelines. Examples of blog policies can be found at "http://budtheteacher.com/wiki/index.php?title=Student_Created_Blog_Policies" and http://room9nelsoncentral.blogspot.com/2007/05/our-blogging-rules.html

B.   Contracts – Student blogging contracts have been successfully used in many classrooms. Blogging contracts should be signed by both the student and parent. Use of a blogging contract can help students and parents to understand that a student's conduct on the blog should be the same as in the regular classroom. Sample contracts can be found at "http://budtheteacher.com/wiki/index.php?title=Blogging_letter" and http://edvibes.com/blog-rules-contract/

C.   Permissions – It is important to remember that posting student work, pictures, etc. requires parental permission. Student creative work and the right to publish it belongs to the student and his/her parent.   In addition, how a student author is acknowledged on your blog is limited by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Additional information about this issue is available at http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/wp/copyright-2002/webpagesfaqs.html#1 In an effort to protect our students, Portsmouth Public Schools requires a signed photo release including internet waiver for each student whose picture or classwork is posted to a blog. A copy of the form is appended to this document.

D.   Protection – Teachers are expected to take appropriate steps to protect student identities. Students should be given aliases to use when the post or make comments on the blog. When posted on the blog, student work should not have limited identifying information. For example student first names might be used, but not in conjunction with last names. In addition, teachers should discuss internet safety with their students prior to using a blog for instruction.

E.   Uses – Instructional blogs can be used in a variety of ways. Teachers can refer to some of the following sites for examples of instructional uses for blogs:

- Foreign language: http://www.acisdspanish.edublogs.org/
- Elementary: http://kimsmithwick.edublogs.org/
- Biology: http://btbiology.edublogs.org/2006/10/25/collaborative-essay-1/
- History: http://tclark.edublogs.org/
- Language Arts: http://hgpliterature.edublogs.org/2007/09/10/
- Art: http://mrmayo.typepad.com/magazine/ - http://noackart.edublogs.org/
- Social Studies: http://triptoburritt.blogspot.com/ - http://mrteslersblog.blogspot.com/
- Vocabulary: http://byrdmiddle.org/outsiders/

3. Resources

The Office of Instructional Technology provides several resources for teachers who would like to create instructional blogs. These resources include teacher coaches, professional development opportunities, and online tutorials.

A. **Technology Resource Teachers (TRTs)** are provided at each building as teacher coaches who can guide interested teachers through the process of creating an instructional blog on the http://ppsblogs.net/ domain. Teachers who are interested in instructional blogging can submit their application for a PPS blog account through their building TRT. When an account is established for the teacher, the TRT will help the teacher to navigate through the setup procedures and provide additional assistance as necessary. Teachers must understand that there is a learning curve involved in navigating a blog successfully. Teachers with PPS blogs must be willing to commit to learning this technology independent of the TRT as there are over 100 templates available each with different features. TRTs cannot be expected to take teachers through step-by-step hand holding sessions on using blogs. **TRTs will not assist teachers with blogs that are created outside the http://ppsblogs.net domain or that do not conform to the current PPS instructional blog guidelines.**

B. **Professional Development Opportunities** have been provided both onsite and off site. The Office of Information Technology will provide two workshops a year on instructional applications for blogging. In addition workshops on using podcasts with blogs are provided through the Consortium for Interactive Instruction at WHRO in Norfolk. Teachers who take workshops at WHRO may apply for reimbursement through the current procedures established by Instructional Technology.

C. **Online tutorials** on blogs and blogging are available through the PPS subscription to www.atomiclearning.com . Currently Atomic Learning offers a Web 2.0 workshop which has a section on blogs. The service also offers tutorials on the Wordpress software used on the http://ppsblogs.net domain.

B.   Professional Blogs

Professional blogs are blogs created by administrators or instructional specialists to foster communication and collaboration with the teachers that they work with. Some examples

include:

- The guidance supervisor uses a professional blog to foster discussion among school counselors. As issues come up at various schools, she posts them to the blog and allows the counselors to respond and offer suggestions on how to approach the situation.
- A science specialist uses a blog to give updates and suggestions to the teachers he works with. Teachers who need ideas on how to approach an instructional issue search the blog using appropriate categories to find suggestions on how to proceed.
- A local high school principal uses a blog to update teachers on happenings in the school. The blog is linked to the school website so that interested parents and community members can stay up to date as well. From time to time stakeholders use comments to applaud a new strategy or ask for clarification about new policies.

1. Guidelines

The school division provides blogs on the ppsblogs.net domain for instructional leaders who wish to establish professional blogs. Blogs found on the ppsblogs.net domain can be easily identified by teachers and others in the community as official blogs established for the use of Portsmouth Public Schools. Instructional leaders interested in using blogs are asked to create their professional blogs using the school division's domain. Instructional leaders may ask for a blog on the ppsblogs.net domain using the application attached.

Professional blogs are seen as a virtual extension of a school division. Instructional leaders are required to moderate all comments submitted to their blog, and will have to determine if they will allow individuals outside of the PPS organization to post comments. Comment moderation will ensure that inappropriate comments are not posted to instructional blogs. Examples of professional blogs below may be helpful to instructional leaders:

- An instructional Specialist: http://pattyoflynn.edublogs.org/
- A Principal: http://principaldawson.edublogs.org/
- School Division Leaders: http://willardr2.edublogs.org/

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understand that there is a learning curve involved in navigating a blog successfully. Those with PPS blogs must be willing to commit to learning this technology independent of the TRT as there are over 100 templates available each with different features. **TRTs will not assist those with blogs that are created outside the http://ppsblogs.net domain or that do not conform to the current PPS blog guidelines.**

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C.   *Independent staff blogs*

Independent blogs are blogs that have little or nothing to do with your work or employment. While independent blogs are usually hobby related, PPS staff members should consider the potential ramifications of publishing opinions "for the whole world to see". Independent bloggers are urged to use good judgment. While the freedom to communicate electronically may lull one into a sense of autonomy, be advised that opinions expressed that reflect poorly on the Portsmouth Public Schools are not protected by first amendment rights and will be dealt with appropriately. The following websites offer some advice on independent blogging:

- http://techlawadvisor.com/blog/2005/04/18/blogging_at_work.html

- http://www.eff.org/bloggers/lg/

- http://edition.cnn.com/2005/US/Careers/04/05/blogging/index.html

- http://www.news.com/FAQ-Blogging-on-the-job/2100-1030_3-5597010.html

Portsmouth Public Schools does not support independent blogging. Individuals who have independent blogs should not access those blogs while at work.

PPS Blog Application

Name: _____
          (First)   (Last)

School/Department: _____

Position: _____

Have you read the PPS Blog Guidelines?

Why do you want a blog?

How do you intend to use the blog?

Will you operate within the blog with in the PPS Blog Guidelines?

_____

Signature   Date

Student Photo, Video, and Interview Release Form

Great things are happening in Portsmouth Public Schools! Throughout the school year, we produce a variety of publications and video productions that highlight student and staff achievements, innovative classroom activities, district-wide programs and initiatives, school board policies and procedures, and general information about our school district. Media organizations also help to promote the activities of our school district through newspaper and television news stories.

In order to protect the rights and privacy of our students, parental permission is required before students can be interviewed, videotaped, or photographed for use in school district publications, television productions, news stories, or websites developed by the school district or other media organizations. We need your permission to use statements from your child, photographs of your child, or videotapes in which your child appears.

Please take a few minutes to complete this permission form. Please answer yes or no in the space preceding each statement. Then, sign your name in the appropriate space.

Name of Child _____ Date _____

Name of School _____

_____ I give permission for my child to be photographed, videotaped, and/or interviewed for use in publications, video productions, or on the website of Portsmouth Public Schools.

_____ I give permission for my child to be photographed, videotaped, and/or interviewed when news media representatives visit his/her school to report on special school programs, classroom activities, or school district events. I also give permission for the news media to use pictures and video tapes of my child and interviews with him/her in the newspaper or on television.

Signature of Parent/Guardian_____

3/1/ 06

References

http://www.edtechmag.com/k12/issues/november-december-2006/blog-rules.html

http://classblogmeister.com/