



Jefferson Township Public Schools Office of Instructional Technology

"Developing 21st Century Skills One "Byte" at a Time"

Newsletter

September 2009

Blog's in the Classroom.

Do you know what a blog is?

Have you ever used one or created one?

Have you ever thought about its place in the classroom?

"A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is 'blogging' and someone who keeps a blog is a 'blogger.' Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog."

Blogs can be a powerful tool in the classroom. Our "digital native" students are very comfortable with email, text messaging, instant messaging and blogging. Not only are they comfortable with this technology, they are interested in it. They are motivated by it.

You can start using blogs in your classroom today to promote discussion on a variety of topics. Here are some examples.

- Start a blog in which you ask your students to state the pros/cons of a given topic.
- Discuss a current assigned reading.
- Discuss an opinion on a current event.
- Post reactions to a movie, video or classroom conversation.
- Allow students to create a new thread with their own subject line related to a class topic. Let them retrieve feedback from the students in the class.
- Post a math problem and have students list a variety of ways to solve the problem.
- Ask students to post a reflection on what was covered this past week.

Teachers can use blogs for:

- Exchanging ideas on lesson plans.
- Discussing classroom management ideas.
- Collaborating across disciplines.
- Discussing and exchanging technology integration ideas and resources.

How can I start a blog?

I have recently installed a wordpress multi-user blog server in our district. This allows us to create as many individual blogs as we would like.

We are currently introducing the high school faculty to this technology. They will be using blogs as their class websites. You can visit our blog home page at <http://blogs.jefftwp.org> to learn more about this initiative.

Our blogs can be kept private for only registered members. We can also password protect individual blog postings to use as threaded discussion boards in our classrooms. If you are interested in setting up a blog please contact Doug Walker: dwalker@jefftwp.org.

A second option is to setup a class wiki. A wiki is a webpage with an edit button. There are various privacy options available on a wiki. Each page has a discussion tab. This will allow students and teachers to start and reply to discussions. If you are interested in learning more about setting up a class wiki please contact Doug Walker: dwalker@jefftwp.org.

High school faculty members have the option to setup a private NING site. This is a social networking site designed for use by teachers and students. These sites allow students to maintain individual blogs (journals), take part in group discussion threads, and even chat about upcoming assignments or homework.

Continued ...

This interactivity occurs in a protected environment that is moderated by the teacher. If you are interested in learning more about setting up a Ning network for your class please contact Doug Walker: dwalker@jefftwp.org.

MOODLE IS COMING TO JEFFERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I am excited to announce that we will be bringing Moodle to our district. *Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment* is a [free and open-source e-learning software](#) platform, also known as a Course Management System, [Learning Management System](#), or [Virtual Learning Environment](#). It has a significant user base with 49,256 registered sites with 28,177,443 users in 2,571,855 courses (as of February, 2009).

Moodle is designed to help educators create online courses with opportunities for rich interaction. Every educator in our district can create a fully secure password protected online learning environment for their classes.

Features of Moodle include: activities, topics, discussion boards, quizzes, grade book, wiki's, blog posts, document manager, and SCORM learning packages.

We just installed the software this week. I will be working on the configuration of it over the next couple weeks. We hope to have it available shortly. Stay tuned for more information!

[Click here](#) for a sample screenshot of a Moodle course screen.



What is Cool on the Web

Instructional Technology Blog

The Instructional Technology Department has a new blog! We use our blog to share resources, instructional ideas and to introduce new technologies.

<http://blogs.jefftwp.org/wordpress/walker>

CURRIKI

Curriki is more than your average website; it's a community of educators, learners and committed education experts who are working together to create quality materials that will benefit teachers and students around the world.

Curriki is an online environment created to support the development and free distribution of world-class educational materials to anyone who needs them. The name is a play on the combination of 'curriculum' and 'wiki' which is the technology they are using to make education universally accessible.

Find lesson plans, activities and resources for all content areas.

<http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/About>

The Teacher Express

A huge collection of resources all in one place. You may want to create a shortcut to his site on your desktop.

<http://www.teacherxpress.com/>