



Have you heard that the latest trend in instructional technology is blogging? A blog (short for web log) is actually a web page which allows visitors to read and reply to content on varied topics, most often successful because of the way it attracts birds of a feather from disparate geographical locations to one online location. Not only are blogs easy to set up and manage, they are quick in allowing visitors to post comments in response to what the blog author has posted on his or her site. Think of the possibilities for the classroom! And if the ideas don't come flowing easily, this week's DD issue should help get the wheels turning!

Another salient feature of blogs is their ability to be syndicated and shared on other websites through RSS (the acronym for Really Simple Syndication). Developed in 1997 by UserLand and used extensively at first by Netscape, RSS has become a popular way to share content between web sites. It allows you to share the latest postings on your blog by showing them on a class web site, a personal home page, or anywhere else you would like to promote your blog.

The good news for educators is that, while there are many ways to pay for sophisticated blogging capabilities, there is a plethora of free blog hosting services online which can have you up and blogging in less than fifteen minutes. The larger question to ask yourself is, "once I have my blog published, what kinds of content do I plan to post there?" The most popular blogs feature new posts every day with all kinds of education-worthy topics for visitors to consider and respond to.

Then again, you may not opt to publish your own ideas on a daily basis. How about your students? What is the potential for groups in your classroom to post to a class blog as a virtual newspaper keeping readers up with all the learning taking place? Perhaps you could use a blog to promote daily journal writing or publish student work. Or maybe you could use a blog to allow students from your classroom to collaborate with students from other locations around the country online. The possibilities are only limited by your ability to imagine uses for this new technology tool.

This week's issue presents both quality free blogging services and some great ideas for education.

Check out what blogging can offer you and your students!

Title	Rating	Grades
<p>Blogger – http://www.blogger.com/start</p> <p>Blogger offers free hosting for your blogging needs. Simply register a name and password, select a name for your blog, and then pick a design template. Once you are in you can make many more choices on how you want your blog to look and function. One of the oldest, simplest and best free services for blogging.</p>	A	E M H
<p>TypePad – http://www.typepad.com/</p> <p>Designed for the more sophisticated blogger, TypePad offers a free thirty day trial period so you can compare and contrast it with other services. Highly recommended for blogs which will be shared with parents and the school community because of the higher level of functionality it offers blog moderators.</p>	A	E M H
<p>BlogEasy – http://www.blogeasy.com/</p> <p>Similar to Blogger and TypePad, BlogEasy offers the ability to post messages, photos, and syndicated material from other blogs. It also allows for multiple authors and editors (great for collaborative group work). I especially like the site promotional tools to help get the word out about your blog.</p>	A	E M H
<p>eBloggy – http://www.ebloggy.com/</p> <p>Another free service worth considering, eBloggy offers weekly themes on which to write, as well as a WYSIWYG (WHAT-YOU-SEE-IS-WHAT-YOU-GET) editing interface and the ability to host group blogs. The blog statistics is a nice feature which allows you to keep track of who stops by to read and comment. The no pop-up advertising policy is a welcome feature, too.</p>	A	E M H
<p>Live Journal – http://www.livejournal.com/</p> <p>LiveJournal is a professional-looking free blogging service that allows more features than its competitors. Using open source software, you can track interests, friends, text messages, and even embed your blog right into your existing home page. For a fee you can upgrade to even more features and functionality.</p>	A	E M H

Title	Rating	Grades
<p>Weblogg-ed – http://www.weblogg-ed.com/</p> <p>Just what educators look for: a single source for all information on best practices in using blogs in instruction. Not only is this page about blogs, it is a blog, allowing readers to respond, ask questions, share experiences and advance the use of blogs at all levels of education. This site is worth bookmarking and returning to again and again.</p>	A	E M H
<p>SchoolBlogs – http://www.schoolblogs.com/</p> <p>While the connection time seems a little slower, the concept here is a good one. Offer a free blogging service specifically for teachers and their students. The features aren't as numerous as other services and the creation of a new blog is not as immediate, but then the environment is free of commercial trappings and more focused on learning.</p>	B	E M H
<p>Blogs in Education – http://awd.cl.uh.edu/blog/</p> <p>A quick one-stop reference on how blogging is beginning to take shape in instruction, with links to examples and further explanations. Focused on secondary and higher applications, the site is nonetheless a good place for educators at all levels to start perusing the possibilities for this new form of web-based communication.</p>	B	H
<p>Educational Bloggers Network – http://www.ebn.weblogger.com/</p> <p>A great site for keeping up with all that's current and upcoming in the world of interactive communication, both online and off. Consider the current front page, which heralds the coming of Wink and Airport Express. Set up as a blog so that readers can respond and interact with one another, it's a great way to keep up with what's new in I.T.</p>	B	E M H
<p>Year of the Blog – http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/barrios/blogs/</p> <p>Barclay Barrios of Rutgers University hosts this site subtitled "Weblogs in the Writing Classroom." Focusing on the affordances of blogging, Barrios covers the technical end of how blogs work as well as writing ideas, and using blogs for instructional content. The additional links offered to other resources only adds to the value of this web site.</p>	B	E M H

Title	Rating	Grades
<p>Bryant Elementary – http://www.bryantschool.org/</p> <p>Here's a great example of how a blog can be transformed into a school web site! Note how this elementary school in Seattle, Washington uses the blog to continually place timely announcements, news items and features without having to create web pages from scratch or FTP changes to a web server. Great application of this technology!</p>	C	E M
<p>Mrs. Leake's Classroom News – http://buckman.pps.k12.or.us/classrooms/leake/</p> <p>Building on the idea of blog as web site, consider how this teacher from Portland, Oregon is able to celebrate student work and communicate the great things going on in her classroom to a wider audience through her use of this blog. Note especially how she brings in photos to help create a sense of partaking in the fruits of the creative process. Very cool!</p>	C	E M

Rating Scale	Grades Scale
A Best of the Web	P Primary – Grades K-2
B Highly recommended	E Elementary – Grades 3-5
C Well designed, but specialized	M Middle – Grades 6-8
D Useful in specific contexts	H High Grades 9-12

Digital Dozen

Summary Sheet: Blogging

Blogger	http://www.blogger.com/start	A	EM H
TypePad	http://www.typepad.com/	A	EM H
BlogEasy	http://www.blogeasy.com/	A	EM H
eBloggy	http://www.ebloggy.com/	A	EM H
LiveJournal	http://www.livejournal.com/	A	EM H
Weblogg-ed	http://www.weblogg-ed.com/	A	EM H
SchoolBlogs	http://www.schoolblogs.com/	B	EM H
Blogs in Education	http://awd.cl.uh.edu/blog/	B	H
Ed Bloggers Network	http://www.ebn.weblogger.com/	B	EM H
Year of the Blog	http://www.bgsu.edu/online/barrios/blogs/	B	EM H
Bryant Elementary	http://www.bryantschool.org/	C	EM
Mrs. Leake's Class News	http://buckman.pps.k12.or.us/classrooms/leake/	C	EM