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# Executive Summary

**Research Question(s)**: What are the effects of blogging in a classroom? How does blogging affect cooperative learning and/or achievement in classrooms?

Upon looking at the work of others on the topic of blogging in the classroom, it has guided me into believing that blogging in a classroom is very beneficial for the students. In my research I found many articles that discussed actual blogging occurring in a classroom setting. Teachers were interviewed and really believed in the concept of supplementing their instruction using blogging. For instance, in MacBride and Luehmann's article, *Capitalizing on Emerging Technologies…*, the teacher whose classroom was studied, Mr. K., "Credited blogs for helping students challenge each other's thinking, ask questions, draw conclusions and provide a forum where students learn content from each other." (MacBride & Luehmann 2008) Obviously, Mr. K. believed in the tool that he chose to use: blogging. However, being a researcher, I did not want to be swayed by the thinking of other teachers and researchers, so I believe that the research plan that I have created is going to be effective in getting real student opinions and raw data to analyze. I do not simply want to know what teachers think of blogging, I need to know what blogging actually does for the students. I need to go straight to the source: the students.

In my research, interviews were conducted with teachers and actual blogs were looked at. I believe that does not give a true picture as to how blogging affects classroom achievement and cooperative learning or how students perceive blogging. Classroom blogging is a relatively new concept, having just been introduced in the past five to six years. Little data has been taken from actual students. Teachers have used blogging to highlight student work (Huffaker 2005), to hold out-of-class conversations (Utecht 2007), and for students to review concepts before tests (MacBride & Luehmann 2008). Students have been encouraged and required to participate in the blogs. However, in my research, little if anything was shown on student achievement in the form of raw numbers. In my study, I will look at student surveys to get raw data, as well as student test scores. It will not be from just one class; rather it will be from two different classes: one that blogs and one that does not. This is unlike any of the research that I have found. Because so little was asked of the students in the studies that I reviewed, I will actually get students feedback and data from testing to form my conclusion(s).

My research plan is a good one because I will be using a very appropriate source for my data: the actual students. The students are the ones actually using the blogs and reaping the benefits (or hating the whole process). In my research plan, I will be looking at data from a survey and from test scores. This will allow me to be less biased in my conclusions rather than giving my own opinion of how I believe the study is going. I have also decided to use two different samples for my research, one classroom that blogs and one classroom that does not. This will allow me to compare results of the classes to see which class has achieved more in the same amount of time. My research plan is effective and beneficial because I will be using information that is actually gathered from student data.

# Appendix A: Literature Review

(Revisions are in red as well as noted at the end of the plan.)

- *This literature review is regarding the effects of blogging in a classroom.*
- *The research that I found covered a few different issues regarding blogs.*
- *I reviewed the literature to get a better sense of how blogs are being used in classrooms and to find out how the blogs are affecting classroom learning.*
- *Blogging in the classroom is a rather new subject matter.*
- *One article, Capitalizing on emerging technologies: a case study of classroom blogging (MacBride & Luehmann 2008), discussed a case study of one classroom blog.*
- *Another article, Blogging on (Richardson 2003), discussed his own implementation of a classroom blog.*
- *Many of the articles referenced ways in which blogs are used publically.*
- *Lastly, the majority of the articles referred to a sense of community in a classroom blog.*
- *My research led me to several real-life examples of classroom blogs and case studies.*

## Introduction

### The Topic

*This literature review is regarding the effects of blogging in a classroom.* The topic started out being about blogging in an elementary classroom, due to that being my field of employment. However, blogging in an elementary classroom has had little to no research on the topic. As it is, I found little research on blogging in a secondary classroom. Much of the research done on blogging is from postsecondary classes. Presented in the following review is research the pertained to secondary classrooms.

### General Overview

*The research that I found covered a few different issues regarding blogs.* Generally the research covered participation of students; specifically students that are more reserved in their classroom participation. It also covered the fact that the students are more thoughtful in their responses to questions when writing their answer as opposed to verbalizing their response (Borja 2005). The majority of the research that I have found pointed out that adolescents (aged 13-19) make up the majority of those who have blogs (MacBride & Luehmann 2008). Due to the numbers being so high, teachers should take advantage of the technology that so many students currently use. Considerations for using classroom blogs were also presented (Harper Jr. 2005).

### Rational

*I reviewed the literature to get a better sense of how blogs are being used in classrooms and to find out how the blogs are affecting classroom learning.* When analyzing the literature, I looked for sources to back up the claims made, the qualifications of the author (where they are from and what they do there), and facts rather than just opinion. I spent a great deal of time locating resources that were not geared toward postsecondary institutions. I did not use literature from blogs themselves, while I did find a great deal of it using Google for a search engine. Those are based mostly on opinion rather than fact.

## Body

### Kinds of Works Reviewed

*Blogging in the classroom is a rather new subject matter.* It has been used only about five or six years. Therefore, there is not a plethora of information and data available. When using the Michigan State University online resources through the library, I found articles from several educational journals. I had to sift through them to find the ones that pertained to secondary and elementary blogging rather than postsecondary. Most, if not all, of the articles referenced case studies in actual secondary classrooms, as well as actual classroom blogs.

### Important Works

*One article, Capitalizing on emerging technologies: a case study of classroom blogging (MacBride & Luehmann 2008), discussed a case study of one classroom blog.* The teacher was interviewed, parts of the blog were shared (screenshots), and the components of the blog were discussed. This same case study detailed how the teacher maintained activity of the blog, accountability of the students, and a sense of community within the classroom via the blog. Students were required to post on each other comments. They were held accountable for accessing the blog due to the fact that they each had to write a review of the class, and they only knew when it was their turn by viewing the previous day's blog. Students were given the opportunity to chat on the blog in their own 'slang' language (the kind used in texting and Instant Messenging). This article is important because it covers procedures that I will be implementing in my own study, such as holding students accountable and what the students need to blog about.

*Another article, Blogging on (Richardson 2003), discussed his own implementation of a classroom blog.* His class read the book *The Secret Life of Bees*, and then blogged about historical information, illustration, themes, characters, etc. Richardson took his classroom blog a step further to engage his students. He actually contacted the author of the book and the author, Sue Monk Kidd, actually conversed and commented on posts made by the students. This showed the students that they are writing for more than just an audience of one (the

teacher). This modeled for the class the public nature of their writing. That anybody can view their blog and comment on it. This encouraged the students to put much thought and time into their posts. In my own study, the blogging class will be commenting on what their peers have written. This article is important because it shows me how important it is to discuss with the sample of students that are supplementing the regular classroom with blogging that not just the teacher is going to read the blogs. Other students in the class will be reading as well, plus commenting on what they have said.

*Many of the articles referenced ways in which blogs are used publically.* For example, Richardson mentioned in his article, *Blog revolution* (Richardson 2005), a classroom blog where students communicate with students in Poland about the Holocaust. Students collaboratively learned with peers from across the globe. In the article *Blogging on* (Richardson 2003), Richardson used the classroom blog publicly to have *The Secret Life of Bees* author, Sue Monk Kidd interact with the students. Students need to realize that the blogs that they are writing are not simply for classroom use. Others in the world can also read what they write and make comments.

*Lastly, the majority of the articles referred to a sense of community in a classroom blog.* Stuart Glogoff (Glogoff 2005), claims that when students blog, "…opportunities for each student to post substantive comments to other students' blog entries add an additional tier of interactivity and social interaction (Glogoff 2005)." Students that are more of the 'shy' type sit back and let others do the talking. Other students spend time thinking of what they want to say, only to have the conversation change direction before they are able to get their thoughts together. Jeff Utecht says in *Blogs are not the enemy* (Utecht 2007), that blogs should be thought of as conversations, not a writing assignment. If students see blogs as conversations, not assignments, they will be more likely to participate fully. For 'shy' students to participate fully, blogs are a good method to get them involved. These students can participate from the comfort of their own home. David Huffaker points out the blogs can be done from anyplace where you have an internet connection. This allows the students their own space to think carefully on their postings (Huffaker 2005). In my own study, students are given a survey. In the survey, students are asked about their comfort level in classroom discussion. Students in the blogging classroom are also asked about their comfort level with blogging. Students in the non-blogging classroom are asked how they believe that they would feel about blogging. This article is helpful to me because I will know to explain to the students in the blogging classroom that they are actually holding conversations online, which is similar to doing so in the conventional classroom, but they are given time to form their thoughts.

## Conclusion

*My research led me to several real-life examples of classroom blogs and case studies.* These have benefitted me because I have actual data that has been collected from teachers and students. The one article that I feel has benefitted me most was the case study of a real

classroom blog and how it is maintained (MacBride & Luehmann). Details were given on how the teacher holds the students accountable, how the students feel about the blog, and how students interacted with each other as well as the teacher. By the second semester of school, the blog was pretty much operated by the students. They knew what was expected of them, they were active in their participation, and it helped them in many ways (homework help, review for tests, and creating a 'textbook' for the world on math). Other pieces of research gave details on how to ensure students participation, safety, and collaboration. Reviewing the work of others has given me new insight into the world of classroom blogging.

*In my revised Literature Review, I added how the particular important articles help guide my research plan. I believe that it provides better insight into why I am using the specific methods that I chose for my plan. I believe that I adding why each article is important and relevant to my own work helps to convince the reader that I have constructed an effective plan of research for my own study.*

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# Appendix B: Research Plan

(Revisions have been italicized as well as noted at the end of the plan.)

- What are the effects of blogging in a classroom? How does blogging affect cooperative learning and/or achievement in classrooms?
- I will take my samples from high school classes in an urban, upper class setting (such as Troy, MI) at the end of a school year.
- I will use two different samples for my study: one class that uses blogging as a supplement to the conventional classroom, and one class that is a conventional classroom that does not use blogging.
- The data that I will be collecting will be coming from two different sources: test scores and a survey.
- The study has several steps that need to be conducted.
- When looking at the raw data, I will look at test scores and the results of the survey.

**Research Question(s)**: What are the effects of blogging in a classroom? How does blogging affect cooperative learning and/or achievement in classrooms?

**Sample**: I will take my samples from high school classes in an urban, upper class setting (such as Troy, MI) at the end of a school year. I will use this setting because it is more likely that the upper class setting has more access to technology/blogs, both at home and at school, with teachers that are comfortable with using the technology. I will partner up with a teacher that teaches more than one section of a class, having him/her use blogging in one section and using the conventional classroom teaching in the other section. This sample is suitable because it is the same teacher teaching both sections, so there is less chance of results being skewed.

**Study design**: I will use two different samples for my study: one class that uses blogging as a supplement to the conventional classroom, and one class that is a conventional classroom that does not use blogging. This will allow me to do the survey in one year, using students that are the same age, grade and enrolled in the same class (just at a different time of day).

**Data sources**: *The data that I will be collecting will be coming from two different sources: test scores and a survey.* I will begin working with the teacher at the beginning of the year, focusing on ways to include blogging in the classroom, both to check comprehension and for cooperative learning. This will allow me to be involved throughout the whole process. The teacher will teach the class the same way for both classes in the classroom itself, blogging will simply supplement

what is discussed/taught in the classroom. We will also focus on ways to include cooperative learning *(via peer discussion, partner/group presentation, etc.)* in the conventional classroom setting. At the end of the school year, I will perform a Survey Monkey survey with both classes asking the following questions:

Class WITH blogging:
1. Did you use blogging in your _____ class this year?
2. What was your opinion of blogging in your _____ class?
3. How often did you participate in the online blogs?
4. How often did you participate in classroom conversations (about the class content)?
5. Do you remember ever commenting on something that somebody said in class?
6. Did you comment on others postings in the blog?
7. Do you feel that discussing the classroom content online in blog form with other students enhanced your understanding of the subject matter?
8. Do you feel that your achievement in the class was higher, lower, or wasn't affected because of the blogging to express ideas and/or ask questions?
9. How comfortable are you asking questions and/or making comments in the classroom?
10. How comfortable are you asking questions and/or making comments in the blog?
11. *Do you feel that blogging/commenting on others blogs was effective in cooperative learning, causing you to benefit from the knowledge of your peers?*
12. *Are there other methods of cooperative learning that you like better than blogging? If yes, what?*

Class WITHOUT blogging:
1. Did you use blogging in your _____ class this year?
2. What was your opinion of blogging in your _____ class?
3. How often did you participate in classroom conversation (about the class content)?
4. Do you remember ever commenting on something that somebody said in class?
5. Did you comment on others postings in the blog?
6. Do you feel that discussing the classroom content online in blog form with other students would have enhanced your understanding of the subject matter?
7. Do you feel that your achievement in the class would have been higher, lower, or not affected if you had used blogging to express ideas and/or ask questions?
8. How comfortable are you asking questions and/or making comments in the classroom?
9. How comfortable would you be asking questions and/or making comments in a blog online?

10. *Do you feel that during cooperative learning (partner discussion, group projects/presentations, etc.) you benefited from the knowledge of your peers?*
11. *Do you feel that there are better methods of cooperative learning than what was used in the classroom? If yes, what?*

I will also compare scores on tests over class content done in both classes. The testing is something that is done in the classroom anyway, so it is something that can easily be compared between the two classes. I will check to see if the class that is supplemented with blogging scored higher on the tests or if they were comparable to the class that did not supplement with blogging.

**Procedure**: The study has several steps that need to be conducted. First, I will work with the teacher to find ways to supplement their regular classroom materials with blogging on the internet. We will come up with focus questions for the students to answer, topics from class for them to reflect on, and ways for students to communicate with others via the blog. *The blogs will focus on concepts covered in class, requiring the students to reflect on their learning. They will be required to give a summary of their learning, as well as reflect on how the material is relevant to their lives. The summaries will allow the students to look at what others have written in case there is confusion in the material covered, as well as help absent students. Students will also be required to make comments on their peer's writing. The students will be required to blog at least three times per week, either at home or in the classroom. They also need to comment on one other person's blog at least twice per week. This allows students flexibility in when they will contribute to the blog, as well as gives the students the requirement as to how often is expected of them.* I will help the teacher so they do not feel that I am coming up with more work for them to complete. This way we will feel like a team. Second, we will set up the blog and get all students from the supplemented classroom set up on the blog. I will make sure to set aside time to go into the classroom to help the teacher introduce the blog system to the students and to be there for the students during a blog work time in case of troubles. I will continue to work with the teacher throughout the year to maintain the blog system in their class, as well as find ways for the students in the non-supplemented classroom to work together, *such as partner discussion, group presentations, and partner work on general classroom assignments.* At the end of the year, I will come back in to the classroom, and introduce the concept of Survey Monkey to the students in both classes. I will have a practice survey for them to complete to build their confidence in taking an online survey. The next day, I will have both classes complete the surveys on computers. Each class will take the survey during their regular class time. Finally, I will look at and analyze the date from the survey. If

necessary, I will randomly pick a few students from the class to conduct a one-on-one interview with. If I do the interviews, I will do the same number of interviews in both classes, as to not skew the data.

**Data analysis**: *When looking at the raw data, I will look at test scores and the results of the survey.* I will first compare test scores. I want to find out if the students in the supplemented classroom achieved higher scores than the students in the non-supplemented class. I will find the average of both classes, because I know from experience that not every class has the same number of students. This will help to answer my question about how blogging affects achievement in classrooms. Next I will look at the data from the surveys that the students completed. I will see what the students thought of the blogging, what effects they think the blogging had on their achievement, and their comfort level both with blogging and discussion in the classroom. I want to find out if students that did the blogging found it to be a beneficial experience, and if the students that did not blog would find using the technology to be beneficial to their learning. *Using the last two questions on the survey pertaining to cooperative learning, I will look at the results to see if the students found blogging to be an effective method of cooperative learning versus the class did not blog but did more conventional ways of cooperative learning. I will use the survey results to see which class thought that they had a better experience of cooperative learning and what kinds they would prefer.* Using the data, if the students that did better in the classroom that used the blogging, one can assume that supplementing conventional classroom teaching with an online technology such as blogging can greatly benefit the students. Also using the data, if the students felt more comfortable using the blogging feature than speaking up and participating in the classroom, one can assume that blogging is a beneficial feature that should be added to other classrooms to raise participation levels.

*In my Research Plan, I lacked describing how cooperative learning would be assessed. I added a few questions to the surveys to get the student's opinions of the methods of cooperative learning that they used in their classroom. Each survey then asks the students to tell if there are other methods of cooperative learning that they would have rather used. I also added the methods of cooperative learning that could be potentially be used in the non-blogging classroom. I also added in how the blogs will be used, such as helping absent students as to clarify material for each other. I added the detail of how often blogging is expected of the students, as well as commenting on each other.*