

# Blogging as Shared Writing: A Lower El. Approach

Ever feel like  
you're juggling  
too much  
already?

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## WHY should we blog with young children?

It might sound like a lot to take on, but here are five great reasons it's worth it!

### 1. Engagement

Regie Routman has already made the case for the importance of shared writing for increasing student engagement, and she's done a much better job of it than I could! See chapter five of her book *Writing Essentials*, or consult the "Must-Know Tips for Shared Writing" cheat sheet linked in the resources section.

### 2. Audience

Nothing I have ever tried in the classroom before has truly conveyed a sense of the audience as well as blogging has. Students can go home and read the blog, they can send the link to their families, they can leave comments and read the comments of others. They

know that *real* people out in the world - *anywhere* in the world - will be able to read their words. This is more powerful than any publishing celebration I have ever done!

### 3. Reinforcing skills already taught

How many times have you looked at students work and thought, "Wow, I thought I taught them how to do this? Why aren't they using it?"

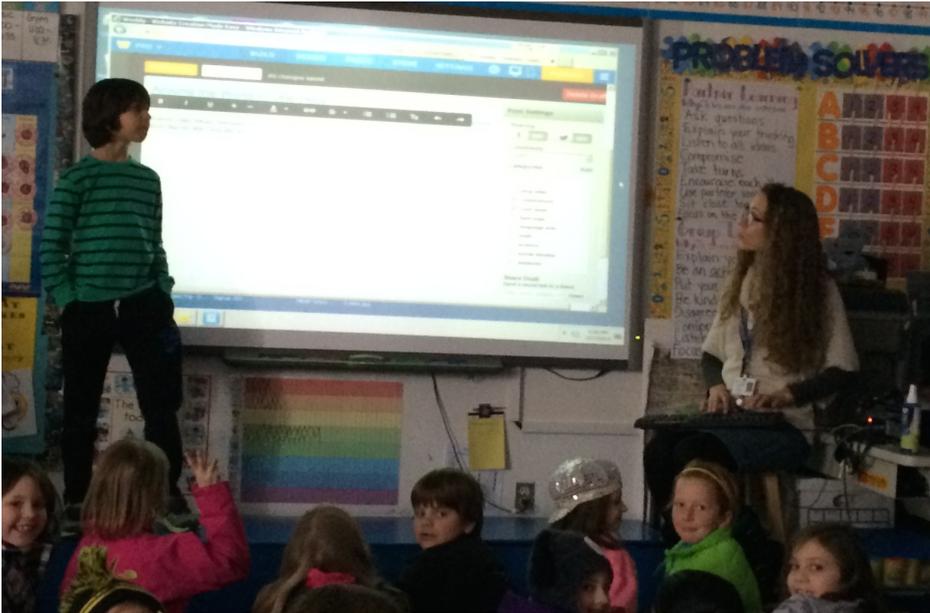
I have found that by blogging together, I can consistently remind students of things we have learned and continually practice applying those skills together (which is, of course, the heart of shared writing). Because they have a say in the final decisions, they are becoming better at knowing how to apply the ideas I've taught in writer's workshop, whether this applies to capitalization and spelling or to word choice and effective endings!

## Program Description:

For younger students, the challenge of blogging in the classroom is independence and developmental appropriateness. In this session, you will learn how you can use your classroom blog as the basis of your shared writing for a practical way to integrate technology into your already packed literacy schedule. And you'll take away ideas on improving organization, clarity, and voice in student writing!

## WHO am I and what is my background?

I have been teaching in the Troy School District for seven years. I spent my first four years teaching first grade, and have taught second grade for the last three years. I earned a masters degree in Technology in Education from the University of Michigan-Flint in 2010. During my studies, I was both excited about the possibilities using technology in the classroom, and frustrated by the lack of ideas and resources for lower elementary students. My criteria for using any technology with my students are that it must: make a meaningful contribution to learning, be developmentally appropriate, and go beyond playing skill-based games. I am still searching for those resources. I hope in some small way that this presentation contributes something of value to my colleagues who are also searching.



#### 4. Developmentally Appropriate Tech

There are blogging sites for young children, and I do encourage parents of kids who are really into it to set up their own blogs from home. However, I know from experience how often things go wrong with technology. When 27 kids need to you troubleshoot, it is not a pleasant or productive day, nor a good use of learning time.

Using blogging as shared writing allows kids to see the mechanisms behind websites and get exposure to how they work - menus, elements, saving, publishing, etc. - without having to navigate that all on their own yet. Yes, things do still go wrong, from posts not publishing correctly to all your content disappearing! In this case, though, kids get to see how you troubleshoot problems with technology, while they don't have to experience the disappointment of all their work going POOF! Troubleshooting is a very real skill they will need to develop as they move into more digital production in the next few years, and seeing you model this now will help them get to know the issues they may face.

#### 5. You're probably already doing it!

Shared writing has been a part of Balanced Literacy for many years now, and you may already be doing it on a regular basis. Blogging doesn't have to be an addition to your schedule or your workload; it can replace the form of shared writing you are already doing. This is technology integration at its best. It meets multiple needs, efficiently and creatively, without adding to the curriculum *just* for the sake of using some new technology.

### WHAT does it actually look like in my classroom?

I have a SMARTboard, which allows students to see whatever is displayed on the classroom computer. I sit on a stool in front of the board and connect to our Weebly site. Once connected, we decide on a topic for the day's post. This year, students decided that we needed a "tiny topic" notebook for the blog, since we were often taking so long to choose a topic that we ran out of time to finish writing!

There is one student who has the job of "Blogger" each week. The blogger picks our topic, calls on students for ideas, and makes all final content decisions. Students offer suggestions, and I prompt them to consider clarity and word choice, always bringing the conversation back to how it will sound to our readers. We reread after every sentence or two, especially when lots of ideas are flying and we are trying to decide which one will fit best!

Students are quick to point out when I have misspelled something or left out a space or a capital. I don't do this on purpose, but it does lend another teaching point to the experience. I always say, "Oh, thank you! That would have been hard for our readers to understand! Good thing you caught it!" I believe this models an attitude that conventions are important, and that having someone point out our errors is helpful, not hurtful!

The trifold handout has prompts that I use already printed on them, but there is space for more, so that you can write your own prompts in! Use these

### Resources for learning more:

1. Regie Routman's "Must-Have Tips for Shared Writing"  
[http://www.regieroutman.org/files/6713/7842/4352/Tps\\_for\\_shared\\_writing.pdf](http://www.regieroutman.org/files/6713/7842/4352/Tps_for_shared_writing.pdf)

2. ISTE Technology Standards for Students  
[http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/20-14\\_ISTE\\_Standards-S\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/20-14_ISTE_Standards-S_PDF.pdf)

3. ISTE Technology Standards for Teachers  
[http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/20-14\\_ISTE\\_Standards-T\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/20-14_ISTE_Standards-T_PDF.pdf)

4. CCSS College and Career Ready definition  
<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/students-who-are-college-and-career-ready-in-reading-writing-speaking-listening-language>

### Blogging Platforms for Educators and Students

Weebly offers free websites for teachers, with the capability of setting up and managing student blogs.  
<https://education.weebly.com>

Kidblog has an easy-to-use interface for students to have blogs of their own.  
<http://kidblog.org/home/>

The Edublogs tagline is "the World's most popular education blogging service".  
<http://edublogs.org>

prompts naturally and fluidly throughout your shared writing session. Your students will begin to use them, too! This is a great way to build the habit of using any teaching point, because it is consistently reinforced through an authentic writing task. *Note: I do not use this trifold during blogging, and eventually you won't either. This is just a place to organize ideas until you become more comfortable blogging.*