

Title of Session: SIGTC - Blogs as Teaching Tools

Moderator: Karen Connaghan

Guest Speaker: Will Richardson

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KarenConna: I like to welcome everyone to tonight's event - Blogs as Teaching Tools Featuring Will Richardson...

CamillaGa: Welcome Will!

WillR: Thanks! Glad to be here.

KarenConna: I also like to introduce Camilla Gagliolo - SIGTC's current president

GerrieK: I'm doing a blog for student teaching now

CamillaGa: Hi, we are happy to see so many of you in Tapped In attending one of our events

KarenConna: Let's first get started by introducing ourselves, what we do and what we'd like to learn tonight

KarenConna: I'll start off

KarenConna: I'm Karen Connaghan from PA, I'm a technology specialist at Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

KarenConna: I'd like to learn how Will reached the Tipping point with blogs in his school

LoriBu: I'm Lori Burch and am an instructional tech specialist in Hilton, NY, working primarily at the elementary level.

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I am a HelpDesk volunteer for Tapped In and I lead a math education and technology discussion. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

Maryanna: I am a technology consultant from southwest Iowa. I have several teachers who are interested in blogging with their students. I also have a district that is just starting to podcast.

LoriBu: not sure exactly what I'm here to learn, but I always come away with at least 1 new idea

WillR: Go Jersey!

GerrieK: I'm Gerrie Kelcher pre-service teacher in third grade In Houston TX at the moment! Will be graduating in May:)

ChrisPr: I'm the sixth grade teacher at my elementary school in Detroit. We have laptops for our sixth graders and am hoping to learn more about blogging.

BrandiC: I am Brandi Caldwell a 12th grade English teacher at Mountain Brook Alabama... I am visiting because I heard a session with Will at Alabama Best Practices Center session. I will be in and out. I love all of the sources you have here!

MikeBak: I'm Mike Baker from Polaris Career Center, Northeast Ohio, teacher trainer for this large district. I've worked with Allan November, and after viewing Will's Podcast with Allan I am looking forward to hear from Will

BrandiC: I have a blog and love it... Will is an inspiration

WillR: Thanks!

HelenK: I work with adult students here in Quesnel BC and have been a fan of weblogged-ed for a number of years

CamillaGa: I am an instructional technology coordinator in Arlington, Virginia and am the current SIGTC president going on four years. I met Will for the first time at Alan Novembers' conference and have since learned and read Will's development of blogs in education.

BillCon: Bill Connaghan Network Admin Cornwall-Lebanon SD Lebanon PA

JeffC: Jeff Cooper, Ed Tech Support Consultant, Tapped In Helpdesk in Forest Grove Oregon.

HeatherBu: I'm a middle school teacher in rural East Texas, looking for new ways to reach out to the kids.

JulieH: K-8 special education teacher in Milwaukee WI

ToniMG: I'm a high school business teacher. I've used my blog in the classroom but would like to learn more.

SherylN: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, adjunct prof and educ. consultant, Virginia Beach, VA

BrendaF: I'm the IT Director at a private high school in Montreal, Canada

GerrieK: I want to know how I can use blogging in elementary school. Jeff was giving instructions to one of my classmates on how to safely set one up for this kind of group. I did not get the instructions.

JulieH: I'm always looking for engaging ways to teach and learn

JulieH: ditto on Gerrie's interest

CamillaGa: I should add that I teach an online course for Virginia teachers on how to use blogs in education and would like to learn more from Will

KarenConna: Great! Thanks everyone for coming.

BradleyZ: I work with Christine at St. Matthew's and have just started an online MA program; I was looking for a way to work with my learning team more efficiently.

KarenConna: Tonight's Guest Is Will Richardson...

WillR: Hi everyone

WillR: Nice to be here with such a diverse group.

KarenConna: Will Richardson, Supervisor of Instructional Technology and Communications at Hunterdon Central ...

KarenConna: Regional High School in Flemington, NJ. He is the author of Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other...

KarenConna: Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms – described as “what every educators needs to know in one ...

KarenConna: handy volume...

KarenConna: He is also the author of www.weblogged-ed.com – a site dedicated to discussions and reflections on...

KarenConna: the use of Weblogs, wikis, RSS, audiocasts, technologies that are transforming classrooms around the world.

WillR: (Shameless book plug here: <http://www.weblogg-ed.com/book>)

KarenConna: I will pass the virtual microphone to Will to provide a brief introduction and then we'd like to open the discussion to questions that you may have for Will.

WillR: Thanks Karen,

WillR: Great to be here.

WillR: Briefly, I've been a blogger for almost five years now, and I've learned more from blogging than from all of the schooling I've had...

WillR: And I've had quite a bit.

WillR: Understand that I'm pretty much a blog purist...

WillR: (Read "blog snob")

WillR: In that I really think blogging is an intellectual exercise...

WillR: And that it's something that we can do with our students...

WillR: to help them LEARN as well as communicate and connect to people and ideas...

WillR: And that while blogging may be an act of writing...

WillR: It's really a response to reading...

WillR: Which sets it apart from the characterizations that most people make regarding blogs as online journals.

WillR: They are really places to test out thinking, to reflect, and to synthesize ideas...

WillR: And they are great tools to use in classrooms, imho.

GerrieK: Can a blog be set up for a classroom without outside access?

WillR: It depends on the software that you use.

WillR: The one that we have at my school...

GerrieK: nods

ChristineL: Our science teacher here at St. Matthew's is doing one of the best classroom blogs I've seen

WillR: www.hcrhs.k12.nj.us

WillR: is Manila, which allows you to make sites that are open to members only.

GerrieK: My students are 8 years old. I want to protect them at this age.

WillR: But most popular software doesn't have that option.

KarenConna: Will, is Manila costly?

WillR: Gerrie, it depends what you mean by protect...

MaryannA: Nebraska teachers have access to manila

WillR: Manila is \$499 a year for the license that you can put on your server and create as many sites as it will hold.

GerrieK: I have concerns because of rumors I've heard about myspace.com

CamillaGa: You also have the option to turn off responses to your blog as well as manage any posting

KarenConna: 499 is very reasonable

LoriBu: James Farmer's learnerblogs.org is free and allows you to moderate before things are live

WillR: Again, on some you do. WordPress is an open source alternative that does this.

WillR: Yes, James' sites are great...but I don't think you can make them totally private.

JeffC: <http://www.learnerblogs.org/>

LoriBu: no, not totally private but you can restrict what goes live

WillR: And www.edublogs.org

WillR: Yes

WillR: With Manila, we have poetry and creative writing students who are working in private spaces.

WillR: Since they are writing about personal stuff sometimes.

JeffC: Some blog sites make it so that only your friends may view what you post...
<http://www.livejournal.org> is one such site.

ToniMG: I've been using blogger.com and have been able to moderate responses.

WillR: BTW, our whole school website is built on a series of about 80 Manila blogs

LoriBu: David Warlick's classblogmeister does allow you to completely password protect a blog and/or restrict what goes live without teacher approval

JeffC: <http://www.livejournal.com/>

WillR: www.hcrhs.k12.nj.us if you want to see what that looks like.

WillR: Yes, Blogmeister is great...

GerrieK: We are starting a poetry unit next week and I was wondering how to incorporate technology!

WillR: But David's servers are getting really loaded...

LoriBu: I've also used Blogger and restricted posting to members only and then kind of worked around creating a school member group

WillR: Alan November has a blogware out now, and I know 21Publish is coming out with something soon.

LoriBu: yes, David's can be clunky to use until you get used to it as well

WillR: You can use Blogger, but it does take some work to get it right.

WillR: So Karen asked about the tipping point at my school...

WillR: Right now there are about 25 teachers who are using blogs...

KarenConna listens

WillR: Everything from English to Health and Phys Ed to Spanish...

LoriBu: secondary only, Will?

WillR: I wouldn't call it a tipping point yet as that's only about 10 percent of our teachers.

WillR: Yes

WillR: 9-12

WillR: But the blogs are growing...

WillR: And the teachers are doing very cool things...

WillR: Studying the Holocaust with students in Krakow Poland...

CamillaGa: We have schools that use only a blog interface for their webpage

WillR: Working with elementary kids in our sending districts...

WillR: Working with authors to study books...

CamillaGa: It takes some coordination at the back end, but it is very easy for teachers

SusanR: Will, have you seen this from eschoolnews re blogs and their impact

SusanR: <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStory.cfm?ArticleID=6208&page=2>

WillR: And having all sorts of conversations after school.

CamillaGa: works for elementary students as well

MikeBak: Our PT3 Grant (www.ciese.org/pathways) offers a neat blogging tool at <http://www.rwlo.org>, with an excellent “moderated discussion area.” We have k-12 teachers/classes making use of it.

WillR: Yes...

WillR: And this is the cool thing...

WillR: Is that there are so many more teachers using blogs

WillR: and using different softwares...

GerrieK: I'm the only teacher at my school with a blogspot and I am a student teacher. The staff has all checked it out and are now interested and starting their own.

WillR: It's really starting to blossom around the world which is great to see.

LoriBu: I have a hard time getting adults, including tech specialists to buy into blogging. Any suggestions?

WillR: I've been writing about that on my blog, Lori...

BillCon: Will I would consider it a major tipping point considering the fact that the school allows it

WillR: I think they need to be shown some models of what can be done...

LoriBu: Thanks, Will. I haven't been there in a little while but I'll check it out

WillR: Read some bloggers...

WillR: Start understanding the changes that the Read AND Write Web offers.

KarenConna: Will what are some of the challenges that your school district has faced as it moved into student blogging?

JulieH: What "hot" models would you recommend most?

JeffC: I think that one of the things that really needs to be overcome the negative media attention surrounding Myspace in particular, predators, etc. Somehow positive attention needs to come out with what people like Will and others are doing with blogs and education.

WillR: Julie... I have a wiki at <http://webloggedlinks.pbwiki.com> that lists links to all of these technologies

WillR: Thanks, Jeff...I agree.

LoriBu: yes, good point, Jeff

WillR: Karen...blogging started quietly and slowly and has grown steadily...

TedSa: don't forget we still have people that think someone on the internet is going to reach out and grab them

WillR: I think by the time it started to really grow, there were enough "best practices" to make the case for blogs.

KarenConna: Will, that's how I've been doing it -- quietly and slowly -- seems to work best

WillR: I agree.

WillR: You have to be subversive...

WillR: ;o)

KarenConna smiles

LoriBu nods and smiles

WillR: But I think we're getting to a point where there are enough examples to show...

BillCon: Off the radar

WillR: And enough experience to prove that we can do this safely with our kids.

WillR: We need to be thoughtful about it, but the effect can be transformative in the classroom.

WillR: There are all sorts of edubloggers out there who are starting to herald the effects of these tools in their classrooms.

LoriBu: and at the 9-12 level, many are doing it without us, so we need to use the teachable moment and help them learn to do it safely and effectively

MaryannA: Do you have any tips on how to encourage the administration to allow students to have email accounts?

TedSa: with some elementary class blogs we need to get to the point where parents expect to see it updated

WillR: Maryann, that's a tough question, unfortunately.

GerrieK: I'm actually still a bit afraid of the Internet. This is all new to me at 52 and my trust is slow to be earned. Until I have complete confidence, I don't want to expose my students. Old fashioned person in the house!

WillR: Gerrie...there's nothing wrong with slow.

MaryannA: Has anyone used Gaggle?

WillR: And you are right, we have to develop trust in the people and the communities we become a part of.

GerrieK: At least I'm trying it out

Sheryln: That's right Gerrie!

WillR: But this is the way the Web is going to work, and the Internet is going to continue to become an integral part of whatever our students end up doing in their careers.

WillR: We need to model these technologies for our kids...

GerrieK: so true

KarenConna: and the students will do it with or without us!

LoriBu: and just in life outside of school in general

WillR: Because they are doing it whether we like it or not.

WillR: Right Karen.

KarenConna nods

CamillaGa: They already socialize online

WillR: Yes

WillR: And if you look at MySpace, you'll see that many of them don't do it very well.

WillR: Which is why we need to teach and model the use of these technologies with them.

GerrieK: My kids are very proficient in technology and are excited that I'm coming on board "at last".

KarenConna: Does your school district have policies in place that address blogs, wikis, etc?

WillR: That's great, and I admire your willingness to do so.

WillR: Yes.

LoriBu: AMEN, Will!!! But it is very hard to convince people of that

WillR: We make it a part of our AUP.

CamillaGa: I think we need to incorporate these technologies to engage our students, but still give them the guidance to use it correctly

WillR: Absolutely right Camilla.

WillR: But I was just writing in my blog today...

GerrieK: My district is 'under construction' a euphuism for does not exist!

WillR: That I really think we've reached a point...

MaryannA: Can't we use NCLB's 8th grade tech requirement to move forward?

WillR: Where EVERY teacher needs to at least understand these tools...

WillR: And have them as a part of their toolboxes...

LoriBu: and whether or not to use technology tools, can't really be an option any more

WillR: Just like "old" paper, we now have digital paper.

WillR: I think that blogs are the best tool at some points and not at others...

WillR: But a teacher that doesn't give students that option...

GerrieK: I'm fighting an uphill battle to integrate technology in my lessons every day. Lack of support, no equipment, it could almost make me feel dispirited!

WillR: That's becoming a problem.

CamillaGa: I heard Alan November last week and he thinks all families will have a blog where they collect all the information they need from their school, clubs, community and other interests all in one place

WillR: I hear you Gerrie.

SusanR: Will, our school district was using an open model (Blogmeister)..now they have converted to a more controlled model....classes must register...support seems to be more extensive

WillR: I think Alan is on the right track, though I don't know it will be a blog.

SusanR: http://blogs3.enoreo.on.ca/?page_id=2 ..take a look at it at the end of the session

WillR: It will be a collection of RSS feeds, though it would be great if they would create blogs.

BillCon: Is your AUP posted on the district site?

LoriBu: is that kind of what suprglu does?

WillR: Bill...no...Lori...Yes

WillR: But Bill...

WillR: if you want sample AUPs and things...

WillR: Check the link on my wiki to Bud the Teacher's wiki.

WillR: Hold on and I'll get it.

WillR: http://www.budtheteacher.com/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

WillR: He's collecting the policies and things there.

WillR: (Also in my book.)

BillCon: Thanks

WillR: What else do people want to know?

MikeBak: Will, Allan is also big on RSS feeds

KarenConna: Does your district do any "formal" professional development related to blogs or is it more "teacher-to-teacher"

WillR: Yes

WillR: We have courses that teachers can sign up for.

WillR: To date we've taught over 150 teachers about blogs, wikis, RSS feeds...

WillR: But the adoption rate is still pretty low...

CamillaGa: In Virginia, we offer an online course

GerrieK: not in Houston

KarenConna: That's great!

WillR: (I don't like to beat them over the head...)

ToniMG: Do you have any examples of blog use in the high school business area?

KarenConna: Have you had any "inappropriate" use issues that you've had to deal with?

WillR: Hold on Toni...

WillR: Karen...just one, and it turned out to be a teachable moment.

WillR: The kids are really very respectful and appropriate in the school sponsored spaces.

KarenConna: I think that would often be the case when it is presented and modeled!

WillR: Toni, if you go here you may find some... http://www.weblogg-ed.com/best_practices

WillR: Yes.

LoriBu: and I think if they know the teacher is reading it and participating, it sets the expectation up differently than in a personal space outside of school

JeffC: I'd like to throw in a plug for Tapped In at this point. Although not a blog (and RSS doesn't work here), teachers may create a completely safe and secure K-12 classroom here for their students. I won't go into it now (in fact, I'm taking my kids to the park), but Bj, myself and others can help set up a class for teachers here.

WillR: Yes Jeff...this can be a great tool as well.

MaryannA: Jeff, how do I find out how to do that?

GerrieK: cool:)

WillR: I think what is interesting about blogs is the transparency and the larger audience.

MikeBak: And for districts with support and technology, Moodle can provide a blogging environment -- open source!

WillR: Moodle is great!

LoriBu: yes, and that's what bothers me about cranking it down too much so that only the kids you are working with are seeing it.

WillR: And they are adding a blog module.

JulieH: BJ what do I need to do to access your help?

JeffC: I'll throw up the instructions Maryann... it will scroll everyone's screen, but then you'll have the directions in your transcript for later use.

JeffC: K-12 Student Group Creation

JeffC: 1) Click the Tapped In tab in the top frame

JeffC: 2) Click the Groups subtab

JeffC: 3) Click the Create a new K-12 Student group link

JeffC: 4) Read all the terms... (recommend copy/pasting the agreement into Word for later use)... check the box saying you agree to the terms... click Continue

JeffC: 5a) Name your group: (ex. Mr. Cooper's AP English) 28 characters maximum.

JeffC: 5b) Nickname: Give it a nickname (ex. cooper_ap) 10 characters maximum and *no spaces* This will be the name of your group room. Empower your students by asking what they want the nickname to be (panthers, peacenicks, etc.)

JeffC: 5c) Purpose: The purpose can be what you want... teach online with your class, collaborate with other classes, etc. This shows up on your group profile page (and may be edited later).

JeffC: 5d) Topics: Select up to three topics that relate to the group (ex. ESL, Language Arts, Technology Education) for your group's profile.

JeffC: 5e) URL: You may type in your school's homepage or any appropriate link. Be aware that this will also show up in the group's profile. If you are looking to collaborate with other K-12 educators, consider giving the teacher's homepage with information that you are looking to collaborate with other teachers and students.

JeffC: 5f) Duration of Group: Defaults to 3 months, can be up to 12 months. The group may be renewed later by the Owner or Moderator.

JeffC: 5g) Grade Level: Elementary, Middle, or High School

JeffC: 5h) Number of Accounts: Select the number of students in your class and add 5 (just in case). If you have more than 50 students select 50 (more may be added manually later). Also consider creating more than one K-12 group.

JeffC: 5i) Prefix: Prefix may be no longer than 6 characters. Prefix will generate default student names (student names can be edited later) If you don't plan on changing their user names, these names will be used by the students with numbers attached. (ex. choose "coops" to autogenerate coops01St coops02St etc.). All students automatically have the St suffix added to their user names.

JeffC: 5j) Click Next

JeffC: 6a) Specify a password: Type it twice, at least 5 characters. All students will login initially with this password. Once logged in, they should immediately change it so that other students cannot use each other's accounts. (more on this in the Quicknote K-12 Group Management). Owners and Moderators may change individual passwords at any time.

JeffC: 6b) Join K-12 Students Box: Check the box to join the K-12 Students group. This is a support group for educators with K-12 students. In addition to posting questions regarding help for your group, you may also post requests for collaboration, lessons, etc. This group has over 400 members at Tapped In.

JeffC: 6c) Click: Create Group: This will create your group. If you are unsatisfied or need to make any changes, simply click the Back button instead.

JeffC: 7) You may now click the link at the bottom of the page to enter your K-12 Class!

MaryannA: Thanks Jeff

GerrieK: thanks!

WillR: YEOW!

JulieH: Thank you!!

JeffC: sorry about that chief!

KarenConna clears her head

LoriBu: part of the power of blogging I think is being open to the larger world outside of your school

KarenConna: Do you have any tips for gaining administrative support for the use of blogs in the classroom?

KarenConna nods to Lori

JulieH: I'm looking forward to playing with this.

WillR: I agree Lori...which is the most difficult thing for many I think...

GerrieK: In Texas they are very conservative.

WillR: the transparency.

WillR: And it really requires that teachers rethink their roles to some extent...

WillR: I started thinking of myself as a connector for my students...

LoriBu: and it takes time from the teacher to manage and moderate and participate

ToniMG: I've set up a group previously but am looking for a collaborative project on Tapped In in the business area. Any suggestions .

KarenConna: teachers become facilitators

WillR: Finding all of those good sources "out there" that I could connect them with to foster their own learning.

GerrieK: I think on the elementary level this would be a hard sell.

KarenConna: and students become constructivists

WillR: Yes, Karen, and kids become teachers as well.

MaryannA: What you need is data, research that shows that students reading achievement scores go up with blogging

WillR: Gerrie...you should take a look at what Anne Davis is doing...

WillR: She's amazing on the elementary level...

WillR: And there are many others.

GerrieK: OK

WillR: Maryann, there is a lot of anecdotal data that says kids are more engaged...

JulieH: Where to find Ann Davis?

LoriBu: I like to work with a blog that anyone can see and anyone can comment to, but the comments come through me for approval before they are live on the blog. That seems to be a compromise that works at the elementary level

WillR: Anne Davis is on my list of edubloggers that you can find here:
<http://bloglines.com/public/wrichard>

GerrieK: I want my kiddos to be savvy to what is going on in the world. I want to teach them to be discriminating in their choices.

MikeBak: Lori -- that would be a moderated blog. Our PT3 grant offers free accounts at <www.rwlo.org> for teachers accordingly.

WillR: What else can I help with?

WillR: Blogs are perfect for that Gerrie!

MaryannA: Will is any of the data posted for admins to see?

LoriBu: Thanks, Mike. I'll take a look

WillR: The anecdotal data?

MaryannA: yes

WillR: Much of it is in the educator blogs out there..

BillCon: (OT) Will are you a TabletPC user?

WillR: Read Clarence Fisher, Konrad Glowgowski, Vicki Davis, Darren Kurpatwas...

MaryannA: OK thanks, Will

WillR: Amazing things are happening in their classrooms...

WillR: Bill..I LOVE my Tablet.

BillCon: Cool love mine too!!

WillR: And Alan November's blogware allows me to ink in my posts...

WillR: Very cool!

KarenConna: Cool

KarenConna: As we wind down our chat, I want to remind participants that you can find a link to Will's book on the Welcome page of the SIGTC office and the link Will posted at the beginning of this transcript....

GerrieK: Boy do I need to learn more before I bite this one off! My skills and knowledge are limited at this time.

KarenConna: Also, Will is be a panelist in SIGTC forum at NECC in July -- If you're going to NECC, be sure to come to the forum...

TedSa: shameless plug!

KarenConna: I'll post info on the forum in May -- it would be nice to see the faces that go with the names of those here!

LoriBu: is the forum info posted on the NECC website?

WillR: Thanks Karen

MaryannA: Thanks Will and all of you

KarenConna nods to Ted

JulieH: NECC please remind who that is?

GerrieK: Thanks for sharing all this helpful information.

KarenConna: National Education Computing Conference - ISTE's conference...

KarenConna: in San Diego July 5, 6, 7

WillR: My pleasure.

BillCon: Will, I have a birds-of-a-feather session lined-up for Tablet user at NECC

JulieH: Thanks

WillR: Cool!

JulieH: night!

KarenConna: Once again, I'd like to thank Will for a wonderful, informative session

TedSa: Thanks for setting it up Karen

BillCon: Please stop by if you get time at NECC

LoriBu nods thanks to Will

WillR: Seriously, I love to blogvangelize...

WillR: ;o)

KarenConna smiles

GerrieK: smiles and waves

LoriBu: yes, thanks for organizing this, Karen

BillCon: I'm trying to wrangle some origami's

KarenConna: welcome Lori - thanks for attending

WillR: That would be great fun

BillCon: for demo

WillR: Let me know...weblogged@gmail.com

BillCon: Sure

MikeBak: Folks concerned w/issues surrounding "myspace" or "conservative reactions"
I recommend Mike Males "How can we keep kids safe" at

<http://home.earthlink.net/~mmales/yt-myspa.htm> -- excellent balance of technology fears and adult projection!

WillR: Well, thanks everyone...

WillR: Hope you found it useful...

ChrisPr: Thanks Will

KarenConna: Thanks Will - have a great night

GerrieK: yes sir!

WillR: Feel free to e-mail me with follow up... weblogged@gmail.com

BrendaF: Thanks. I look forward to reading your book.

WillR: Please let me know what you think.

GerrieK: good night and thanks for all the helpful websites.

WillR waves goodnight

KarenConna waves