HOT Blogging: A Framework for Blogging to Promote <u>H</u>igher <u>O</u>rder <u>T</u>hinking

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Abstract

This article describes instructional practices with blogs in elementary classrooms. Schools need to prepare students for the new literacies required when reading on the Internet. Blogging is an easy way to begin. A theoretical rationale for blogging with elementary students is provided. Learning from the examples of successful blogs by elementary teachers, four common types of classroom blogs with accompanying examples are shared: Classroom News Blogs, Mirror Blogs, Showcase Blogs, and Literature Response Blogs. Resources and suggestions for starting a classroom blog are explained. Finally, HOT Blogging: A Framework for <u>H</u>igher <u>O</u>rder <u>T</u>hinking is discussed. This approach to blogging provides teachers with a systematic way to integrate blogs, deepen comprehension, and teach the new literacies of online reading comprehension.

It is Sunday evening. With a steaming cup of English Breakfast tea by her keyboard, Stephanie LeClair (pseudonym) navigates to the blog she recently set up for her classroom. She is curious to see what her fifth grade students have posted over the weekend.

"How do I integrate writing so it supports reading?" It was a regular question for Stephanie, as for any dedicated literacy educator. Stephanie had recently incorporated a response blog into her curriculum. She posted open-ended prompts to her blog about *The Spiderwick Chronicles* by Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi. The prompts invited students to share their responses. In addition to integrating writing to support reading, classroom blogging prepared students for the new literacies of the Internet (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; 2006; Leu et al., 2007.)

Not having previously blogged herself, Stephanie began her journey by spending an hour with the school's technology teacher, Ms. Lowe (pseudonym). Ms. Lowe introduced her to *Edublogs*, at http://edublogs.org , one of the many free blogging sites for educators. By the end of the day, Stephanie had not only started her classroom blog, she had also started to connect in-school and out-of-school new literacies (Alvermann & Cammack, 2003; Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca, 2003; Hull & Schultz, 2002).

The weeks progressed smoothly. Stephanie was posting regularly and her students were commenting on the prompts she posted. Quickly, however, she began to sense student interest waning. Comments were becoming more brief, superficial, and formulaic.

Stephanie was worried about this development. She decided to go to her students, to find out what they could do together to use the blog in more thoughtful ways. Stephanie started an online discussion, on the class blog, and her students shared these comments:

"Can I put one of my poems up there?"

"I want to be able to post questions to the blog and have my classmates answer them."

"I really want to write about the book I am reading at home…not just what I think will happen next in *Spiderwick*."

These comments opened up important issues for Stephanie, issues that are essential for all of us to consider as the Internet enters our reading and language arts classrooms.

The purpose of this article is to explore ways in which blogs can support your reading program, especially to develop higher order thinking (HOT) while reading and writing. First, I will provide an introduction to and a theoretical rationale for blogging. Next, resources and ideas will be shared to help spark possibilities for blogging in an intermediate grade classroom. Four common types of educational blogs will be presented. Finally, HOT Blogging, an instructional framework that uses a blog to develop higher order thinking, will be described.

What is a Blog?

A blog or "weblog" is an easily editable web page with posts or entries organized in reverse chronological order. Many different formats for blogs are emerging, (Mortensen, 2008) and the features that are used depend on both the blogger and the tools provided by the blog host.

Typically, a blog consists of a header and two to three columns. Figure 1 depicts a simple three-column blog. The center column is often home to the most recent post (text entry) by the author. Reader comments (replies or responses to the author's post) on this blog can be found in the right hand column. Blog comments can often be found immediately under the post to which the comments refer. The newest posts appear first, and all posts include both a title and date. The Archive houses older posts and comments. This Archive usually appears in the left or right hand column. The left hand column in Figure 1 also includes a Blogroll, links to other blogs or

frequently visited websites, organized in list fashion and often by category. In this way, the author can visit related blogs from one central location with ease.

Figure 1. Simple Blog with Common Features
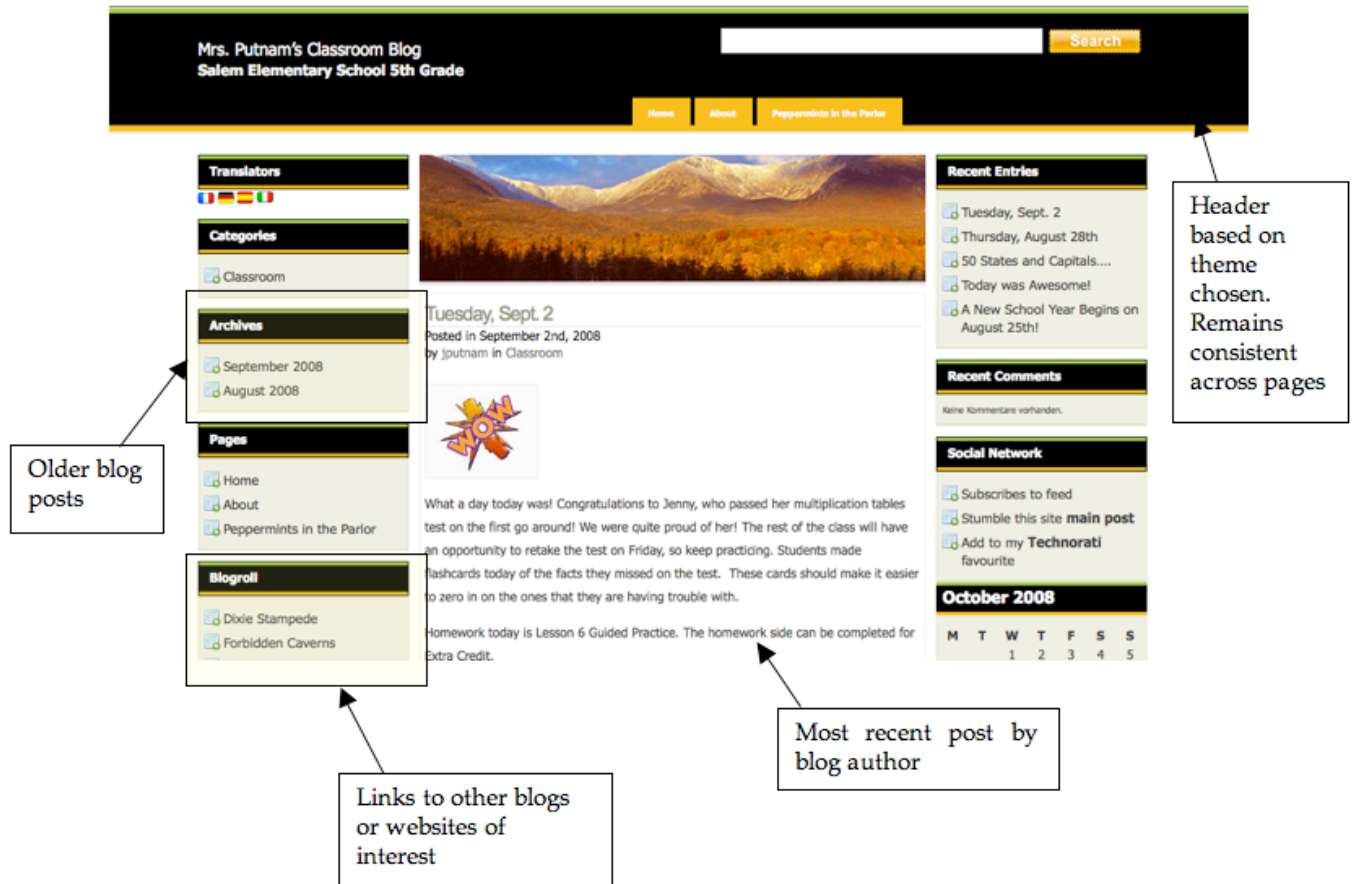
Blogs can have multiple pages. *Pages* and *Categories* are two additional ways to organize posts and comments on a blog. These areas are similar to file drawers full of folders. Each page/category can hold links and/or posts related to a specific topic or student. Some additional features that blogs may include are language translators; calendars; and photo viewers. The blogger determines which features are used.

Why Bother Blogging: A Theoretical Rationale

Why should you consider a blog for your classroom? The answer is simple. The Internet is this generation's defining technology for literacy (Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004: Leu et al., 2007). It is home to a continuously emerging set of new technologies for literacy such as search engines, email, blogs, wikis, instant messenger, social networking tools, and many others yet to emerge. Each requires new skills and strategies.

Schools need to prepare students for these new literacies by integrating them into the curriculum, and blogs are an easy way to begin.

Some believe that we simply need to place computers in the hands of our students, and they will learn what they need (Negroponte, 2006). Yes, many of our students can develop basic tool use without us. We see them on the Internet at home, communicating through instant messenger (Lewis & Fabos, 2005), blogs (Mortensen, 2008), and other online tools (Lenhart, 2005). One survey has reported that some 12 million adolescents aged 12-17 maintain their own blogs in the U.S. (Lenhart, 2005). However, simply using these tools does not predicate effective and efficient use. Howard Reingold, sums it up well by describing our students in this way,

> This population is both self-guided and in need of guidance, and although a willingness to learn new media by point-and-click exploration might come naturally to today's student cohort, there's nothing innate about knowing how to apply their skills ...(Reingold, 2006).

There is also a second reason to make a classroom blog an important part of literacy learning. A blog does not simply develop communication skills. Instead, online communication has become an essential aspect of online reading comprehension (Castek, et. al, 2007). On the Internet, writing is intrinsically integrated with the reading comprehension process (Leu, et al. 2007; Castek, et al., 2007). As online readers gather information to solve a problem, they frequently analyze information, critically evaluate, synthesize across multiple texts and communicate with others using IM, email, blogs, wikis, or other communication vehicles. (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Leu et al., 2007). These essential new literacies of online reading comprehension emphasize higher order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Anderson, 2005; Bloom, 1956; Coiro & Dobler, 2006) and can be practiced through blogging.

A third and equally important reason to use a classroom blog is to bridge an ever-widening gap between out-of-school literacies and in-school literacies (Alvermann & Cammack, 2003; Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004; Hinchman, et al., 2003). Most literacy educators work hard to provide authentic opportunities that attempt to break down those barriers. Broadening the audience for student writing and thinking, providing a space for collaborating outside of the typical classroom discussion, problem solving on the Internet, and learning to communicate safely—all can be developed within the context of blogs.

Perhaps, however, the most cogent reason for blogging in your classroom comes from a teacher, widely known for her online classroom work, Mary Kreul from Richards School in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin. When asked, "Why should educators take the time to blog?" Ms. Kreul replied,

> "I think the biggest advantage to blogs is that they provide an authentic audience for student writing and work in general. In the past the teacher was usually the only person who read student work. With a blog, student work can be read by classmates, parents, extended family members, school community members, project partners, classroom teachers, pre-service teachers, and anyone around the world who locates the class blog" (Personal correspondence).

We can learn from Ms. Kreul and other teachers who have been blogging with their classes.

Learning from Others: Four Common Types of Blogs Found in Elementary Classrooms

Some of the most common types of blogs being used in schools today are Classroom News Blogs, Mirror Blogs, Showcase Blogs, and Literature Response Blogs. Blogs often incorporate

more than one of these primary functions and, given the creative minds of effective teachers and the rapidly changing nature of literacy on the Internet, many more types will emerge.

Classroom News Blog. Many classroom blogs are used to share news and information with parents and students. Often, this is the first type of blog a teacher will use (Richardson, 2006). Teachers update classroom news blogs on a regular basis, posting homework assignments, providing updates on curriculum for parents, and sharing any other information that could benefit the home-school connection. Examples of Classroom News Blogs can be found in Table 1.

Mirror Blogs. Mirror blogs allow the blogger to reflect on his/her thinking–hence the mirror metaphor. An example of this type of blog is *Edublogs Insights: Comments, Insights and Occasional Brainstorms*. Many teachers invite their students to develop their own mirror blog entries on the main classroom blog. See, for example, Carol Marits' grade four class. Other Mirror Blogs may be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Classroom Blog Examples By Type

Type/Title	URL
Classroom News Blogs	
Mary Castle's first grade blog	http://michellesmelser.blogspot.com/
Mr. Thompson's second grade classroom blog	http://gcs.infostreamblogs.org/tthompson
Mary Kreul's 4th grade class	http://mskreul.edublogs.org/
Mr. Monson's Grade 5 Blog	http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=59644
TAS Grade 3 ESL	http://grade3esl.blogspot.com/2008/08/welcome-to-20082009-school-year.html
Mirror Blogs: Teachers	
Edublogs Insights: Comments, Insights and Occasional Brainstorms	http://anne.teachesme.com/
The Miss Rumphius Effect	http://missrumphiuseffect.blogspot.com/
Cal Teacher Blog	http://calteacherblog.blogspot.com/
Mirror Blogs: Students	
Carol Marits' grade four class	http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=119124
Brian Crosby's 6th grade class	http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=65078
Showcase Blogs	
Have Fun with English! 2	http://fwe2.motime.com/
Ms. Cassidy's Grade One Classroom Blog	http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=1337

Literature Response Blogs

Mary Kreul's Class Blog	http://mskreul.edublogs.org/category/caldecott-award-nominations/
Bearup's Bloggers (fourth grade)	http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=128294&l=1225156782
English Corner (sixth grade)	http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=17192

Showcase Blogs. Many teachers use blogs to post student art projects, podcasts, and writing in Showcase Blogs. Of particular interest are the ways in which second language learners use these spaces to write and respond in their second language in more authentic ways and for more authentic audiences. *Have Fun with English! 2* is an Edublogs award winner where students from Portugal practice their English. The blog is a combination of student and teacher writing, artwork and even audio messages from students. Many of the blog posts are student podcasts (audio clips) describing their day with the written text just underneath.

Literature Response Blogs. Literature response journals are common in elementary classrooms. A Literature Response Blog simply moves this idea online, onto a blog, where the teacher may sometimes post a prompt and invite student responses to a text. Using blogs to bridge a familiar "in school" activity with this "out of school" tool provides students with a different medium for literature response (Boling, Castek, Zawilinski, Barton, & Neirlich, 2008; Williams, 2005). Examples of Literature Response Blogs are listed in Table 1. Collaborative blog posts may be especially useful. This type of teamwork is necessary in our global economy (Friedman, 2005; New London Group, 1996) and may serve to increase each student's awareness of effective writing strategies. An example of a collaborative response blog entry, from Ms. Kreul's class blog, appears in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Literature Response Blog Post at http://mskreul.edublogs.org/2007/10/23/pinkie-gladys-gutzman/

OCTOBER 23, 2007 02:23 PM

Pinkie Gladys Gutzman

By Katie, Susan, Charlie, and Brooks

Do you know a kid named pinkie Gladys Gutzman? We do! We read *June B. Jones is a Beauty Shop Guy* by Barbara Park Illustrated by Denise Brunkus.

In the first chapter, Junie B. decides to change her name. She gets really excited and runs into the kitchen to tell her mom and dad her new name, which is Pinkie Gladys Gutzman. Her first name is from her favorite color. Her second and third name is from her snack lady at school.

You should really read this book because it has a lot of suspense and humor. Barbara Parks writes this book from a perspective of a kindergartner, which makes it a fantastic book to read! This book will give you nothing but laughs out loud, you should really read this book!

We recommend this book to kids K5 with a parent or first through fourth grade without a parent. We really think that you will love this book. Will Junie B. listen to her father and not cut her hair or will she? Pinkie Gladys Gutzman says good-bye!

Posted by marykreul at 02:23 PM in Book Reviews | Permalink

Beginning to Blog

If you wish to begin your own blogging journey, here is a simple four-step process.

Step 1. Explore examples at a central site. Visit two central sites with examples of educational blogs to gather ideas for your own classroom blog: *Class Blogmeister* (http://classblogmeister.com/) or *The Edublogs Awards* (http://edublogawards.com). At the former site you can see how hundreds of different teachers have set up their own classroom blogs. At the *Edublogs* site, blogs that have been voted "the best of" in a variety of categories over the past few years can be explored.

Step 2: Locate additional classroom blogs with a search engine. Use a search engine to locate and study frequently visited classroom blogs on the Internet. With *Google* or *Yahoo* type the following terms: blog, classroom, fifth OR 5th grade. This combination of search terms will locate many fifth grade blogs. The most frequently visited and linked-to sites will appear on the first few pages of results. These are blogs that other teachers often visit to get new ideas for their own classrooms. You can do the same.

Step 3. Select a blog provider. There are a number of different providers to choose from. Most are free. Creating one class blog for all students to post to may be the most efficient way to begin. Once you and your students develop confidence and expertise using the classroom blog, some blog providers include the ability to add individual student blogs, which you can moderate. Table 2 lists some of the most common providers for classroom blogs. Explore each one and evaluate it for your own needs. You may wish to also check with your technology support person to make sure it will be accessible in your school and is consistent with your school's policies. Additionally, check to see that blogging or communicating via the Internet is listed within your school's Acceptable Use Policy. If not, secure parental permission for student blogging.

Table 2. Classroom Blog Service Providers

Blog Provider	Features
Edublogs for Teachers http://edublogs.org	Provides free, ad-free blogs for teachers at no cost. Students may comment if the teacher allows this. Especially helpful video tutorials for intial set up.
Edublogs for Students http://edublogs.org	Provides free, ad-free student blogs at no cost. Each has an independent blog. Recommended for intermediate grade levels and higher.
21 Classes Cooperative Learning http://www.21classes.com/	Provides free, ad-free blogs for teachers and students. Each student blog accessible from main portal. Communicate with all students simultaneously through main portal. Recommended for intermediate grade levels and higher.
ePals SchoolBlog http://www.epals.com/products/esb/	Free to educators. Searchable archives allow past postings to be easily accessed. Design templates include calendars, surveys and Classroom-Only, Parents-Only, and Public Areas.
Landmarks Class Blogmeister http://classblogmeister.com/	Free to educators. Connects teachers to a variety of blogs at different grade levels. Easy to search for blogs by grade bands. Student pages/blogs can be created by teachers.

Step 4. Set up your blog. Visit the link for the blog provider you have chosen and follow the steps to sign up. As the owner of a blog, you have many choices. With some, the teacher has complete control over viewing, posting and commenting. You may choose, for example, to only allow students with a teacher-assigned password to read and post to the blog. You may also prefer to moderate and approve comments before the comments appear. All these options are clearly explained in video tutorials found at http://edublogs.org/videos.

While the steps to starting your classroom blog are basic, keep in mind that exploring options for classroom blogging, and initial blog set up will take time. With any new tool or curriculum, an initial time investment is typical. However, as familiarity and comfort grow, time demands diminish. Additionally, you may decide the extra time is well spent given the new opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills afforded through blogging.

Expanding Your Blogging Repertoire: HOT Blogging: A Framework for Higher Order Thinking

If, like Stephanie, you seek blogging experiences that will motivate and expand students' responses and increase higher level thinking while reading and writing, HOT Blogging may be for you. HOT Blogging develops higher order thinking around the new literacies of online reading comprehension (Castek, et al., 2007; Coiro, 2003; Henry, 2006; Leu, et al., 2007). The approach consists of four recursive steps: 1. Bolster Background, 2. Prime the Pump, 3. Continue the Conversation, and 4. Make Multiplicity Explicit. Each integrates both traditional reading comprehension skills and the new, higher-order thinking skills often required during online reading comprehension.

As students read online and off, HOT Blogging allows them to share diverse perspectives and exchange information with one another on the Internet. This supports the development of online comprehension and communication skills and creates a collaborative learning community that builds a deeper and broader understanding across the curriculum. HOT Blogging provides opportunities for questioning texts, thinking critically about an author's message, and synthesizing across diverse perspectives- all higher order thinking skills.

Traditionally, dialogue journals have provided a useful tool for capturing exchanges that serve to deepen comprehension of text (Atwell, 1998). Moving this instructional practice onto a blog allows us to widen our audience for students, minimize the demands on the classroom teacher, and maximize the comprehension of texts. The four, recursive steps in the HOT Blogging Framework adapt dialogue journal approaches to the Internet to help students develop rich conversations through both talk and written text.

Bolster the Background. During this stage, you post activities and questions on the blog designed to build background knowledge about the selection that students are reading. Then, students read online to locate, critically evaluate, synthesize information, and communicate their ideas by posting what they have found to the blog, inviting others to comment.

For example, before reading *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, you might post a blog comment inviting students to locate three sites that could help their classmates prepare for reading and understanding the book. These resources help all students to build background knowledge and prepare them for reading the text. In short, invite your students to locate useful sources to build prior knowledge about the selection they are about to read and share this with others.

Building background knowledge is important because students with greater prior knowledge about a text are in a better position to understand it more deeply (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Duke & Pearson, 2002). All readers use their existing knowledge and a range

of cues from the text and the situational context to construct a mental model of meaning from the text (Pressley, 2000; RAND Reading Research Study Group, 2002). Research also suggests that students with greater prior knowledge remember more, are better able to determine what is important in the text, and use that knowledge to draw inferences from and elaborate on the text to achieve higher levels of comprehension (Afflerbach, 1990; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Once background has been built, students are ready to Prime the Pump.

Prime the Pump. During Prime the Pump, use your blog to help students think deeply about the background they have built and what they have read in the beginning chapter(s) of the text in order to share an initial interpretation (Langer & Close, 2001). One approach is to post an invitation to students to share any of the following types of thinking:

- confusions that may need to be clarified;
- first impressions of the characters, or story line;
- a summary of what has been learned so far; or
- connections to themselves, other texts, or the world.

A final aspect of Prime the Pump is to require students to read what others in the class have posted in order to prepare for a conversation. Instead of having students tell their own thoughts in a small group or class discussion, ask them to share *other* students' comments from the blog. This approach to starting the conversation holds students accountable for reading and considering their classmates' perspectives right from the start. During the discussion, ask students to jot notes from the conversation. The notes will help students in the next stage of the HOT Blogging Framework: Continue the Conversation.

Continue the Conversation. In this stage, students begin to summarize and synthesize understanding across multiple textual units. While thinking about the novel they are reading, the blog posts by other students, and the group/class conversation, students are asked to synthesize what has been shared and learned. Synthesizing is more than simply summarizing though; it involves original thinking (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) and requires the use of higher order thinking skills (Anderson, 2005; Bloom,1956). Synthesis can be challenging for both the teacher to teach and the students to practice. Partially completed outlines or guides can help. The guide in Figure 3, for example, provides a scaffold for students as they begin to synthesize across many pieces of text in order to craft a new response.

Figure 3. Starting to Synthesize- Synthesis Scaffold

Synthesis Scaffold- Thinking Across Text for Deeper Understanding

My Thoughts	Comments from_____	Comments from _____	Comments from _____
copy and paste your blog comment here	copy and paste a classmate's comment here	copy and paste another classmate's comment here	jot some notes from your group/class discussion

Ask yourself this, How are my classmates' comments the **same or different from mine**? In the chart above, circle ideas that are the same as yours. Box the ideas that are new or different. *When reading fiction, categorize these similarities and differences by Characters, Setting, Plot, Problem/solution or Themes:*

Now, take a few minutes to **THINK about any NEW ideas** you have about the text. You might choose to think about your classmates' comments, and share your thinking about their ideas below:

Finally, combine your writing from the two boxes above & paste it below. Voila! You've synthesized across multiple texts!

Students should work in pairs while crafting synthesis comments since this can prove especially supportive. With this and earlier stages in this framework, good models and teacher think-alouds will support the development of better student work.

The synthesis process can occur at any point in the text and can be used multiple times in the course of reading a novel or reading online. Reading through student blog posts with a critical eye will help you determine the amount of practice students need with synthesis. Questions to focus your assessment of their blog postings might include the following:

- Do the posts include a summary of other students' blog posts or discussion comments?
- Do the posts include any new thinking?
- Are the posts well organized and focused?
- Do the posts reflect inferential thinking that moves beyond simple recall?

Make Multiplicity Explicit. By inviting students to read, think, and comment on the classroom blog, you make multiplicity explicit. Students regularly encounter how differently their classmates think from one another. When different ideas are expressed, students are supported in thinking deeply about diverse beliefs and positions (McLaughlin, 2004). This too, is a type of evaluation or higher order thinking skill, which requires more than simple summaries or retells. Often, this phase may be initiated by a prompt that you provide. You might also use a

comment a student posted previously, asking all students to address that issue. This will draw out the many interpretations that may exist. As students encounter multiple perspectives, they will also see how important it is to support one's perspective. To convince someone with a differing point of view, evidence and clear explanations become necessary.

Crafting a response that includes evidence is not often easy. As with earlier stages in the framework, a teacher think-aloud while constructing a well-supported comment will increase the likelihood of students learning how to support their comments with evidence. Figure 4 shows how a teacher modeled the use of evidence, from both personal experience and from the text, to support the point of view expressed in a blog comment. Students were posting about the book, *How to Eat Fried Worms* by Thomas Rockwell.

Figure 4. A teacher demonstrating a critical point of view along with the use of evidence during a blog post.

Text being read: *How to Eat Fried Worms* by Thomas Rockwell

Initiating prompt, posted on the blog:
"If you were Billy, would you have eaten the fifteen worms? Why or Why not?"

1. **<u>Restate</u> the Question And Indicate Who Posted It**
   Ms. L. asked if I would have eaten the 15 worms if I was in Billy's shoes.

2. **<u>State Your Opinion</u>**
   There is no way I would have eaten 15 worms.

3. **<u>Provide multiple reasons</u> to support your opinion.**
   It is sickening. Also, it might make me throw up. Finally, my real friends would never ask me to do that.

4. **<u>Use evidence</u> from the reading selection and include page numbers so that others can refer to your evidence.**
   I wonder why Joe didn't stop Billy from doing this (See p. 59). None of my friends would ask me or bet me about something so gross. Your true friends don't make you do things like that.

Once students post their interpretations with evidence, the cycle of reading begins again. Ask students to read their classmates' responses, noting which are similar and different and in what ways. Use these responses to show students how diverse perspectives can further deepen and enrich one's own thinking. You may, again, need to demonstrate how this is possible by thinking aloud. Alternatively, they can return to the Synthesis Scaffold in Figure 4. The scaffold can focus their thinking on the different opinions classmates have about the issue or event.

Literacy Teaching and Learning Captured through the HOT Blogging Framework. The skills and strategies required within the HOT Blogging framework support a number of IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts (1996). Indeed, HOT Blogging is a nice way

for you to integrate the standards within your curriculum. When students read web pages and posts on blogs in addition to classroom texts, they "read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world" (19). As students synthesize across websites and blog posts, they *"gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience, and [they] use a variety of technological and information resources"* (27-28). While writing for themselves and others they "employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes*"* (25). When discussing the posts and the variety of perspectives found within, they "apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts" (22). These standards and the HOT Blogging framework require the higher order thinking in which we want all our students to engage.

Stephanie's Story

One final week remained in the school year. It had gone quickly, as all good years do. Stephanie noticed that only a few loose tealeaves remained in her cup during another reflective Sunday at home. The tealeaves reminded her, somehow, of her students' comments from earlier in the year. Their ideas had prompted many new discoveries about the possibilities blogs hold for literacy learning.

"Can I put one of my poems up there?"

Stephanie set up a new page within her classroom bog, called *Our Best.* This was a place where students could publish their writing and artwork. She knew her students would benefit from a broad audience for their work, so she made this area of the blog available to anyone. She was somewhat apprehensive about doing so, but she set the blog's permissions to require her approval before any comments appeared on the blog. She invited students to share the blog address with family and friends, so they could see their "published" pieces and receive comments. She was amazed at how many people provided thoughtful comments. Parents and grandparents, especially, posted many wonderful comments about work that appeared here. The demand from her students to publish their work at *Our Best* made the creative juices flow in their classroom.

"I want to be able to post questions to the blog and have my classmates answer them."

This idea reminded Stephanie of a basic principle from Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; 1989) -- that turning over the questioning process to students helped them to question the author better during reading and increased comprehension. Stephanie began setting up individual blogs, within her account. Next, she invited small groups of students, each week, to develop the best higher-level question they could for the class from the book the class was reading and post it at one of their individual blogs. The class then commented at the individual blog, just as they had at Stephanie's blog earlier. This prompted much deeper thinking about the story than even Stephanie might have accomplished.

"I really want to write about the book I am reading at home…not just what I think will happen next in Spiderwick."

Stephanie smiled as she remembered this comment. On their individual blogs, students were encouraged to post about their interests and outside reading. A number of students quickly started sharing their outside reading experiences at their blogs. Others would visit these posts to gather ideas for new books to read and new online resources that provided extensive information

about the book and the author. This, as much as anything, convinced Stephanie that blogging was changing the social practices around literacy in her classroom.

HOT Blogging Reflections

Stephanie thought, too, about her use of HOT Blogging this year. Her use of this framework provided an important structure to increase higher order thinking in the books her students read. It was clearly visible. She thought this might have come from the increased use of online resources that students were reading as she frequently used the Bolster the Background and Prime the Pump steps at repeated points, during the reading of a selection. As students gathered and shared online information about the topic, they had to synthesize across sources including classmates' posts. This seemed to make them think more deeply about the story selection they were reading. This was especially evident when she compared her students' initial blog posts to the ones at the end of the year.

Yes, it had been a very good year. Stephanie put on another pot of tea.

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