BLOGGING IN THE CLASSROOM

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In the classroom, I wage a constant battle with my students to pay attention instead of text messaging each other, browsing email or flat out talking on their cell phones. You might wonder, then, why I wish to experiment with yet another web-spawned distraction for my students.

During my summer internship at NUMMI, I have been part of the experimental blog group. I have watched as an initialy somewhat stiff and perfunctory workers diary rapidly morphed into an all-purpose tool for venting, philosophying, trading recipes and hot web sites – even occasional details of the work week. In short a community developed and grew where none had existed before. I would like to take back that sense of community to my classroom and see if I can capitalize on it.

I am already well known at Irvington High School for being tech-savvy and using the web and its resources for my classes – my use of WebAssign for homework is particulary nortorious. So introducing yet another web tool as part of my curriculum will not be a problem. The challenge will be getting students and parents comfortable using it.

The rules that IISME set out for us bloggers seemed too restrictive to me, and I was happy to see that everyone else observed them as little as I did. In keeping with that philosophy, I plan on making my blog as open-ended and free-form as possible. I want to be able to write whatever I want, and I want my students and their parents to do the same. The less restrictive I am about how the blog site is used, I am sure the more people will visit it and use it.

Which is the key: currently the vast majority of email I get is from students, usually with quesitons on homework or asking for extensions. I get virtually none from parents, and it is usualy about grades. I would like to open up the discussion to cover what I believe teaching si about and why I teach physics, links to real life and how others feel about these subjects. And how I can serve them better.

Given the above, I do not have a rubric as such for this ETP. Rather, I intend to compare the frequency and content of my communication via my old methods and of the blog. I will consider the ETP successful if I have more postings than email and notes from home, and if the topics in postings cover a broader range of topics and contain more in-depth discussion than email or notes.

I plan on blogging about how my day went and reflecting on what went right and what went wrong and what I want to change, noting current events that are relevant to what we are studying or are connected to the curriculum, and any other random thoughts or ideas that I want to pass on. In addition, of course, I will respond to any student or parent entries and try to establish a dialogue with my correspondents.