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The Effects of Blogging in the Elementary Classroom on Students' Writing

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This starred paper submitted by Tracy Fix in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

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School of Graduate Studies

THE EFFECTS OF BLOGGING IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

ON STUDENTS' WRITING
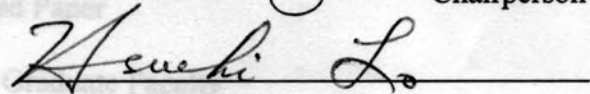
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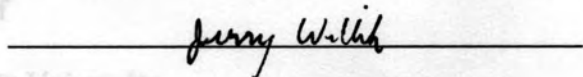
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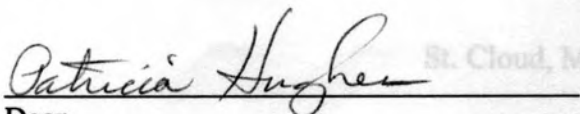
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

As I embark on an adventure of fulfilling my master's degree, I find myself wanting to write my starred paper about how to motivate my students using new technologies. I use new technologies to learn more about educational topics as well as other personal interests. I use Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and YouTube for various reasons. They all promote communication among the people I decide to have in my "community." I enjoy using these tools to communicate with family, friends, colleagues, and education communities. Specifically, these tools have allowed me to keep up with what is new in educational technology as well as new teaching approaches. Sometimes I have to stop myself from checking my Twitter and Google+ accounts or contributing to them. I usually get immediate feedback and I like the fact that I can collaborate with anyone in the world.

I currently teach in an elementary computer lab for students in kindergarten all the way up to grade six. I am always looking for new ways to teach technology use to these students. I am a member of an Elementary Technology Teacher Ning. A Ning is a customized social network. I use this social media to gather ideas as well as give

teachers on how to incorporate technology into their curriculum. I have always wondered if all of this technology will have a positive impact on student engagement or achievement.

Furthering my education has helped me make time to create new learning with technology. One technology I had never tried until I began my graduate studies was a weblog, also known as a blog. I drafted my first blog post as a reflection of my graduate studies in the fall of 2012. I kept editing it until I finally realized that I needed to publish it. I used to check my blog two times a day to see if anyone had posted comments. Comments allow for peer feedback. I often wondered if the topic of my blog was of interest to anyone. I also found myself being more reflective and ready to support my stance when classmates would question me in the comments section of my blog. I posted once a week for 2 months and it got a little easier each time. I looked forward to reading the comments. Thinking about my blogging experience led me to believe that blogging could motivate children to learn to become better writers.

As I sit and watch my 7-year-old daughter write words and stories on any piece of paper she can find, I cannot help but smile at the excitement she has for putting these words and ideas on paper. She loves to write stories, but most of all she loves to send me messages from her iPod. She began by sending just words, words she had just learned. Then, she began to send sentences and ask questions. You might be thinking, "a 7-year-old with an iPod?" I must say, she has learned a lot about literacy with that little device! Now that she is in second grade, she sends messages to more

than just me. She sends messages to one of her friends at school. They talk about what they do at home and try to conger up a play date. She sends messages to her aunt in Wyoming telling her about what she has learned at school or that we got snow. Her iPod has not replaced her pencil and paper, but it has enhanced her writing skills and experience. She is always asking what certain words mean that her aunt might use in a message as well as how to spell words. She has gotten better at discussing these things with me as well as becoming a critical thinker. As a result of this, she has not fallen for the shortened "text speak" that tweens and teens use today. I hope to have her gain proper writing skills prior to her exposure to this "texting language."

Almost every time I mention the word "write" in my sixth grade classroom, I hear some sort of moan or groan. I do not see much excitement about writing with the sixth-graders compared to the second-graders, who are my daughter's age. I would like to be able to bring back some of that excitement for them. I wonder what I could do for these older kids who hear the word "write" and groan in apprehension. I cannot possibly get them all an iPod and tell them to send me a message as an assignment, but I can help them become more engaged in their writing. Maybe this engagement will help them learn to become a better writer. In my experience with the sixth-graders, I continue to see more improper use of grammar and the shortened "text speak" that have become popular through instant messaging and texting and status updates.

A one to one iPod program is not going to be implemented very soon at my school, so I would like to integrate blogging in my curriculum. Therefore, the purpose of my action research is to find some answers to the following questions. Would

students edit their writing before they clicked on the "publish" button like I did or would they just simply click "publish" without second thoughts? Could blogging be brought into my classroom to help motivate students to write better? What could the effects of blogging in the elementary classroom possibly have on student writing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children, teens, and adults from around the world are using a new written language also known as text-speak, textisms, textese or txt (Kemp, 2011; Wood, Meachem, Bowyer, Jackson, Tarczynski-Bowles, & Plester, 2011). Kemp (2011) explained that using mobile technology as a means of communication has prompted this text-speak. Parents and educators believe that an increase in electronic communication and informal text-speak are the reason we are seeing such low-quality student writing (Sweeny, 2010; Turner, 2009). Kemp (2011) stated that many children in developing countries have mobile phones by ages 9-12. These children are still merging and strengthening their reading and writing skills. Kemp suggested this could be one reason exposure to text-speak may disrupt their conventional literacy development. Green (2007) said that textisms are made up of a mixture of abbreviations and acronyms at the user's discretion. This could explain why Plester, Wood, and Bell (2008) found children to use many different abbreviations than what was found in text glossaries. They would use their own phonological awareness to create their own version of words to keep the texts short.

Turner (2009) questioned whether or not the exposure of text-speak is truly a problem in student schoolwork. Wood et al. (2011) stated that childrens' lexical representations and processes are not yet fully developed. Consequently, exposure to words via reading does not appear to transfer easily into their written representations of words in memory. The above statement suggests that children will not see incorrect/shortened spellings and remember them that way. Plester, Wood, and Bell (2008) found a positive association between the use of text-speak and performance on a verbal reasoning measure on 11 and 12 year olds. Plester et al. (2008) also found a significant positive relationship between spelling scores on a standardized task and the ratio of text-speak to real words that were used when converting sentences into text messages in 10- to 11-year-olds. This research is contradicting what some parents and educators are claiming; text-speak is the reason for the low-quality student writing (Turner, 2009). Lenhart, Arafeh, and Smith (2008) found that in general teens do not think technology negatively affects the quality of their writing; however, they do admit that sometimes text speak occurs in their schoolwork.

Students need to know when it is appropriate to use text-speak and when they should use formal writing. Turner (2009) suggested a classroom discussion with examples of communication situations divided into categories (i.e., where communication takes place). Students can then translate these utterances into each category starting out slowly and increasing the pace as the lesson goes on. Turner (2009) referred to this as "flip the switch." Activities similar to this will likely help students understand that language varies by context and what is appropriate in one

setting may not be appropriate in another (Turner, 2009). She asserted that the occurrence of text-speak in the classroom could be used as an opportunity to teach the nature of language (Turner, 2009).

Students use all sorts of devices to communicate all day long. The findings from the Pew Internet & American Life Project and National Commission on Writing show that teenagers feel they are more likely to edit or revise their writing when using a computer (Lenhart et al., 2008). Banister (2008) found that students publishing a blog had an easier time editing their writing as well as encouraged more writing. They are getting good at typing and tired of using paper and pencil. As one student was quoted in Kajder and Bull (2004) "it isn't boring—something different than paper and pencil." Because of the ease and speed of typing, we are seeing more from our students (Kajder & Bull, 2004). Incorporating technology into writing topics at school seems to be a trending way to motivate these young writers as well as encourage them to keep writing. According to Hendricks, Hendricks, Murnen, Cochran, and Nickoli (2013), new literacies are surfacing and are necessary to participate in today's digital world.

Lacina and Griffith (2012) said that technology is like oxygen—a necessary component in the lives of 21st Century children. These children are very familiar with media and technology tools available. It is important that educators integrate these technologies into their curriculum. It will allow students to learn in the traditional classroom as well as outside of the classroom (Lacina & Griffith, 2012). Teenagers spend much of their time texting, instant messaging and updating their status, but they

do not feel that this type of communication is *real* writing (Sweeny, 2010).

Furthermore, these teenagers believe that they will need to have good writing skills to

achieve success and hope that technology will be used more in their formal writing

instruction in school (Lenhart et al., 2008). Using online technology allows teachers

to develop digital literacy skills for both themselves and students as well as provide an

opportunity for students to strengthen their literacy skills (Witte, 2007).

Students who create their own blogs tend to be productive writers both in and

out of the classroom (Lenhart et al., 2008). Experience with classroom blogging

provides practice in reading and writing, creativity and ownership, which allows

students to attain a higher level of literacy (Banister, 2008). Blogs, or weblogs are

primarily used as a way for students to express themselves; it is best described as an

online journal (Drexler, Dawson, & Fredig, 2007; Lacina & Griffith, 2012).

Classroom blogging topics can include information about books that the students are

reading, reflections, current events and other topics covered in their classes. Davis

and McGrail (2009) found that students enjoy opening up their blog to find a new

comment from somewhere in the world and from people of all ages. According to

Chen, Liu, Shih, Wu, and Yuan (2011), blogging offers a way for students to

communicate with others outside of the classroom and school. Anyone with Internet

access can comment on a blog that is open for the public to read and comment on. As

cited by Drexler et al. (2007), blogs are a constructivist tool where bloggers can share

ideas, construct knowledge and build upon each other's work. Blogs also archive

student work so teachers and students have the ability to look back and see growth.

Oravec (2003) stated that blogging encourages the development of individual, critical voices within the broader context of classroom interactions.

Students use blogging as a way to provide peer feedback and promote higher order thinking skills. Drexler et al. (2007) cited that blogging can:

- Promote critical and analytical thinking
- Promote creative, intuitive and associational thinking
- Promote analogical thinking
- Be a medium for increasing access to exposure to quality information
- Combine the best of solitary reflection and social interaction (p. 141)

According to Oravec (2003), weblog development can empower students to become more analytical and critical. This can be done through actively responding to Internet materials, students can define their positions in the context of others' writings as well as outline their own perspectives on particular issues. Through the use of student surveys, Kadjer and Bull (2004) found that students wanted to have access to each other's blogs, allowing them to read and/or respond to each other. Blogging allows students to provide their peers with comments about their writing without the teacher having to be involved (Chen, Liu, Shih, Wu, & Yuan, 2011). Blogging allows students to communicate in a new way. It is has been referred to as an online journal (Drexler et al., 2007). In a traditional journal, students wait for days, sometimes weeks, for the teacher to give them feedback. Lenhart et al. (2008) and Lacina and Griffith (2012) felt that children can become better writers when they know they have an audience to read and respond to their writing. Drexler et al. (2007) cited that blogs allow comments to become thoughtful feedback and allows for revision–essential steps in the writing process. This new form of communication enhances class

discussion and creates a community outside of the classroom (Davi, Frydenberg, & Gulati, 2007). Students no longer have to wait for the teacher to give feedback; they are able to get feedback from peers or depending on the privacy of the blog, anyone in the world.

Allowing student choices provides the opportunity to think critically about what is best for the particular situation. Turner (2009) engaged in a discussion with her high school sophomore students about when it is appropriate to use text speak or standard English. They all agreed that standard English should be used because this type of online writing was related to school. These students would post comments such as "Can we please capitalize I" or "Clean up your grammar." Turner (2009) suggested that educators negotiate with students which mode of writing will be used for different activities used in the curriculum. Integrating technology, more specifically blogging, into writing instruction can engage students and motivate them to participate more fully in the writing process (Lacina & Griffith, 2012).

Higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking and problem solving are also present when students are commenting on their peers' blogs. Educators are always looking for ways to encourage critical thinking skills. Incorporating blogging into their curriculum may just do that for them. Zawilinski (2009) stated that allowing students to post questions for their classmates to comment on is one way that blogging promotes higher order thinking. Oravec (2002) noted that blogging may develop critical thinking skills because students must carefully evaluate what they read and

write, as their words can be seen by anyone in the world. Oravec (2002) also stated "Weblogs can be used in classrooms to enhance literacy and critical thinking" (p. 617). According to Lacina and Griffith (2012), educators must teach children how make comments with substance. For most young writers it is difficult to create a comment with substance. Educators could model this to students especially at the younger ages (Lacina & Griffith, 2012).

Even with these skills that blogging can bring to our students and classrooms, there are some downfalls that might hinder us from using a weblog in our classrooms. Student privacy has always been an issue in K-12 education. Witte (2007) implemented a blogging project in her middle school classroom. One student disclosed a neighborhood he lived in and the school administrator made them stop using the blog for fear of an online predator gaining access to his blog posts. Internet access outside of school is also an issue. In order for a student to make a post they must have Internet access. Internet access is not always affordable for families or even available. I live in a very rural area and struggle finding a high speed Internet service that is reliable as well as affordable. Not all schools have wireless Internet available to their students or guests. Many times it is limited to just the computer labs or just the staff. With the trend of Bring Your Own Device and One to One initiatives in K-12 schools, Internet access in schools is on the rise.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

In Chapter II, I discussed the research related to student writing, text-speak, and blogging. The research has shown that integrating technology with writing has a positive impact on student writing. I will use blogging as technology integration with writing in my classroom. This chapter discusses how I will conduct this action research.

According to Lacina and Griffith (2012), a blog is a website in which a person writes about personal experiences, opinions, and activities; otherwise known as an online personal journal. For the purpose of my action research, one sixth grade class will blog about their interests as well as any information they would like to share about their writing project(s).

The action research will be conducted in a small pre-kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school in a rural community located in East Central Minnesota. There are approximately 450 students in the school with approximately 22 students in each grade level. The sixth grade class with whom I will conduct the action research with has 22 students consisting of 12 girls and 10 boys. All of the students in the class are White/Caucasian and from low to middle class families.

The information to be collected was over one quarter, which is about 9 weeks. The pre-writing samples were taken from the previous quarter. Blogging was introduced in the previous quarter so the process was familiar to the students. The data collected from the blogging was only from the 9-week period in which the action research was conducted.

Prior to blog implementation, I completed a writing assignment with the students about online safety. This 2-paragraph assignment served as a pre-writing sample. I used a rubric (Appendix A) to evaluate the assignment. This rubric includes categories that evaluate normal writing skills such as spelling, grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and syntax. The rubric also includes categories that evaluate the use of text-speak in student writing. I also interviewed (Appendix B) the principal to get his permission to implement the blogging project as well as to get any insight he may have had on the topic of blogging. He asked me to get parent permission prior to implementing the blogging project (Appendix F).

Once we begin blogging, I had the students write two to three paragraph research papers on a Minnesota Explorer and an Animal from Minnesota. I used the same rubric (Appendix A) to evaluate these writing assignments. As they were working on these writing assignments we continued to blog about the assignments as well as things that interest them. I encouraged them to post at least two times per week and make comments at least two times per week as well. I also blogged with the students. I made comments on their blog posts as well as posted information for them to use on their assignments or something to inspire them to continue to blog.

When the students were finished writing about a Minnesota Explorer and Animal, I interviewee the students to find out their thoughts on our blogging project (Appendix C). The questions addressed their feelings toward blogging as well as whether or not they felt it made their writing better.

I used graphs to show my findings. To analyze the blogging experience I put the number of times each student posted and commented in graph form (Appendix D). To analyze the writing assignments I compiled the rubric scores into a graph (Appendix E). This graph shows how each person scored on their pre-writing assignment as well as the two writing assignments that we did while blogging. By putting those scores next to each other, it was easier to see if there were any growth from pre-writing to the other assignments. To analyze the blogging data, I used a chart/graph (Appendix D). This graph will allow me to see how much blogging was done during the process.

Chapter IV

DISCUSSION

Throughout the review of the literature, I found that blogging has positive effects on student writing (Banister, 2008). After the completion of my blogging experience I found that there was little evidence to either prove or disprove the above statement. In the chapter that follows, I explain the results I found in my action research.

Before implementing the blogging project, I interviewed the principal (Appendix B). He asked me to send out a parent permission form (Appendix F). When asked what to do with students whose parents would not give permission to blog, he said he was not sure why they would not agree to it, but if it happens, I could not require students to do it. He said he would like to have access, but never actually contributed. The principal liked the idea of a blog open to the public because it would address the technology standards as well as give them actual hands-on experience with learning digital citizenship. He also felt that blogging would be a memorable experience for the students and that they would enjoy communicating with each other outside of school. He felt like just having extra practice writing during this project

would have positive effects on their overall writing. I also shared a story of a student who inadvertently disclosed the neighborhood where he lived in one of his posts. I asked what he would do if this happened to us. He said he would like me to approve all posts and comments before they get published if it is possible. This was time consuming for me and since I never knew when students would access the blog (in or out of school) it made it difficult for me to publish them in a timely manner. Some students said that they lost interest since it would take so long for me to approve what they wrote.

Now, we will examine the graph in Appendix D. This graph shows how many times students made blog posts and comments on our class blog during the action research. I encouraged students to make two blog posts and comments per week. If they followed through with this they would have made eighteen blog posts and 18 comments during our action research. Only one student made 18 blog posts. That same student made 12 comments. The majority of the students made between three and eight blog posts and comments. This is less than half of what I wanted them to do. This could be because of the loss of interest in waiting for me to approve all posts and comments.

Next we will take a look at the graphs in Appendix E. Each graph shows how students scored in each category of the writing rubric. This shows us trends in their writing samples. There are four scores each student could earn in each category. A three means there were zero mistakes made, a two means that there were one to two mistakes made, a one means that there were three to four mistakes made and a zero

meant that there were more than four mistakes made. Each graph in Appendix E follows the same rule.

According to "Writing Sample #1: Pre-Writing" graph, only two students were missing vowels in words, six students use acronyms and three students used shortened or abbreviated words in their pre-writing sample. These three categories are all characteristics of text-speak. I will focus mainly on the results in these areas, but I will point out the improvements in the other areas as well.

"Writing Sample #2: MN Explorer Report" graph shows a slight improvement in the three text-speak areas: missing vowels, acronyms and shortened/abbreviated words. Most students were scoring a three in those categories. In this writing sample students improved their spelling and grammar, syntax, and use of capital letters. After this writing assignment it appears that blogging has positive effects on student writing.

The third graph, "Writing Sample #3: MN Animal Report," shows that all students scored a three in the text-speak areas. This means that no one in the class was using text-speak on their third writing assignment. In general, there seemed to be some improvement in the students writing skills. There were more students scoring a three in each category on the rubric on the last writing assignment than there were on the first.

At the end of our blogging project I interviewed the students (Appendix C). Most of the students seemed to like the blogging project. Some of them did not like it at all and some wanted to see their post and/or comments immediately instead of waiting for me to publish them. Most did not think the blogging would help them

with their writing and students enjoyed seeing comments from their peers. One

student found it funny when someone corrected their grammar in one of their posts.

Most enjoyed seeing what their classmates had to say. The best part, according to one

student, was that they could do this from home.

In conclusion, the students enjoyed the blogging experience. They seemed to

gain better writing skills when comparing their pre-writing sample to their last writing

sample. One could assume that the blogging experience could be the reason for the

improved writing skills.

Chapter V

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main finding of my action research was that there was a positive effect on how the students scored on their writing assignments. This suggests that blogging benefits their writing. The previous literature on this subject has shown positive associations between blogging and student writing. My action research found this to be true.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this study that need to be considered. Students who have computer or internet access at home had more opportunities to comment or create blog posts than those who are blogging and do not have internet access at home. Students will have more opportunity to write, therefore giving them more practice writing. Another limitation would be that the writing prompts will not be the same, but similar in difficulty.

The school in which the study was conducted required me to approve all student posts and comments prior to being published. Students stated that they lost interest in blogging when they had to wait for me to review and publish what they

wrote. They would not see immediate results and got bored with it. I was also required to have parent permission to be a part of the blogging experience. There were two students whose parents would not allow them to be a part of the blogging experience. I could not require the rest of the students to make blog posts or comments since not all of them had permission to do it. It also took a very long time to get the parent permission forms back, so we were unable to learn about how to make posts and comments prior to the action research. Students were learning how to log in to the blog as well as make a post or comment at the same time they were blogging and writing. Some students accidentally commented as a guest because they forgot how to log in. I did not factor in guest comments when I tallied up the number of posts/comments made by the students.

Another limitation for the project was that I only see the students two times per week for 25- minute periods. When I give homework, I have a hard time getting assignments back from these students. They rarely remember to bring materials with to class. These short class periods caused us to focus more on the writing and research than the blogging.

Recommendations

The blogging activity the students engaged in had a positive effect on their writing. However, I would recommend a longer length of time for the whole project. One quarter with them was equal to 18 sessions total. With such a short period together, I felt like we were always pressed for time. I encouraged more writing and research than I did the blogging, especially for those students who take longer to get

things done. With more time to just blog I feel like we may have been able to see even more positive effects on their writing. I would even suggest blogging for an entire quarter so the students would truly understand the process and purpose of blogging. After that period of time, I would incorporate the writing assignments while also blogging.

I have always known that integrating technology into a lesson adds time. Although, since I am a technology teacher, I believed that adding this technology, blogging, would not add extra time. I thought that it would be the same as any other lesson. The blogging added extra time to our lesson, but I did not figure it into my planning. For the reasons stated above I believe that more time to blog and more time to research and write would be beneficial.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Writing Rubric

Name:

	3	2	1	0
Appropriate use of capital letters	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistake made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Appropriate use of punctuation	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistakes made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Missing vowels in words	0 words missing vowels	1-2 words missing vowels	3-4 words missing vowels	5 or more words missing vowels
Spelling/Grammar	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistakes made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Use of acronyms (LOL)	0 acronyms used	1-2 acronyms used	3-4 acronyms used	5 or more acronyms used
Use of Shortened-abbreviated Words (great=gr8)	0 shortened words	1-2 shortened words	3-4 shortened words	5 or more shortened words
Syntax: sentence and paragraph structure	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistakes made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Totals				

Final grade: /21

APPENDIX A

Writing Rubric

Name:

	3	2	1	0
Appropriate use of capital letters	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistake made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Appropriate use of punctuation	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistakes made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Missing vowels in words	0 words missing vowels	1-2 words missing vowels	3-4 words missing vowels	5 or more words missing vowels
Spelling/Grammar	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistakes made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Use of acronyms (LOL)	0 acronyms used	1-2 acronyms used	3-4 acronyms used	5 or more acronyms used
Use of Shortened-abbreviated Words (great=gr8)	0 shortened words	1-2 shortened words	3-4 shortened words	5 or more shortened words
Syntax: sentence and paragraph structure	0 mistakes made	1-2 mistakes made	3-4 mistakes made	5 or more mistakes made
Totals				

Final grade: /21

APPENDIX B

Principal Interview

I am working on an action research project for the completion of my master's degree. I would like to implement blogging into my 6th grade curriculum. I would only do it with one of the sections of 6th grade to see if it will work. It addresses the new revised standards created by International Society Technology in Education (ISTE) and Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO). It will also be a good way to have students practice being good digital citizens. I would like to see what effects blogging will have on their writing. I have a few questions to ask you before I get started with this project.

1. Would this blogging project require parent permission?

2. How should I handle a situation where a parent will not allow their student to participate?

3. Would you like to be involved? (making posts, comments etc.)

4. In my research I found a school that implemented blogging in one of their writing classrooms that was open to the public. How do you feel about this?

5. This same school had one student reveal the neighborhood where he lived. He did not disclose a city or school name or even an address but the principal made them stop blogging. He shut them down completely. How would you handle a situation like this?

6. In your opinion, what benefits does/could blogging have? How do you think it will affect their writing?

1. We have been blogging for about 1 month now. How do you like it so far?

2. Do you feel like it has made you a better writer? If yes, how? If no, why not?

3. About how many posts did you make? (approximate)

4. About how many comments did you make?

5. Do you like having your classmates make comments on your work?

6. Did anyone ever comment on your grammar or spelling? How did it make you feel?

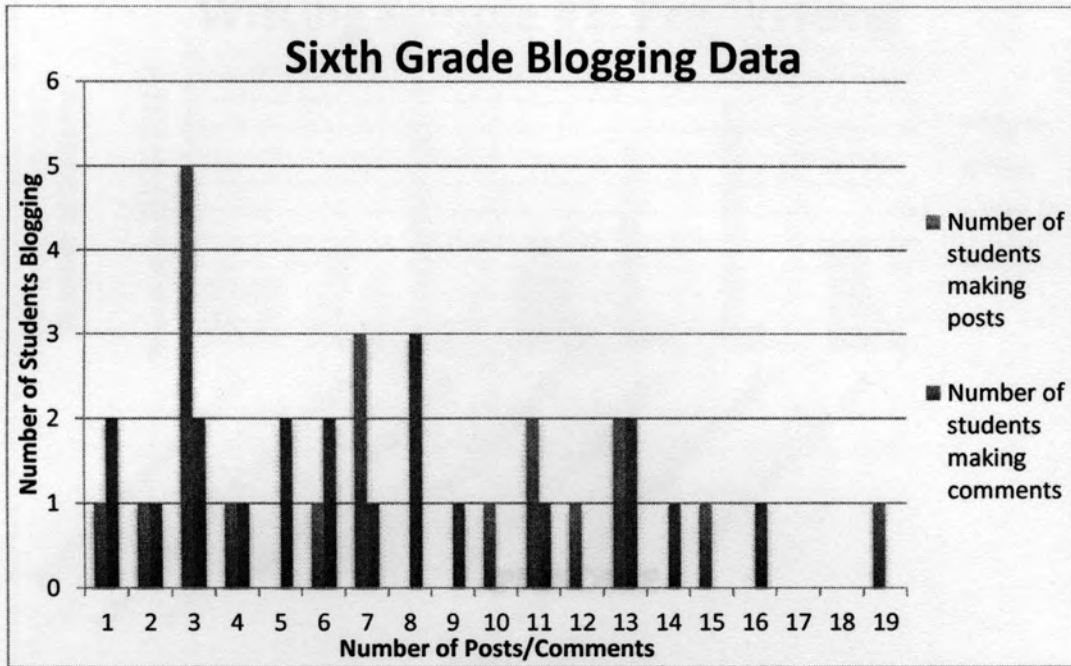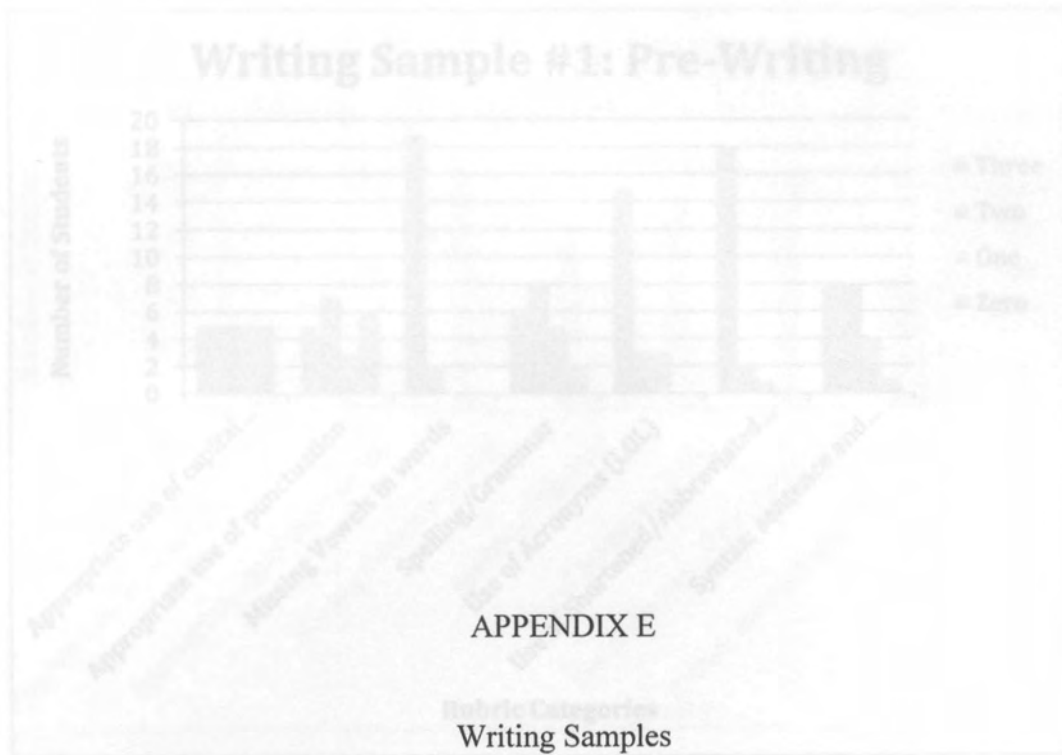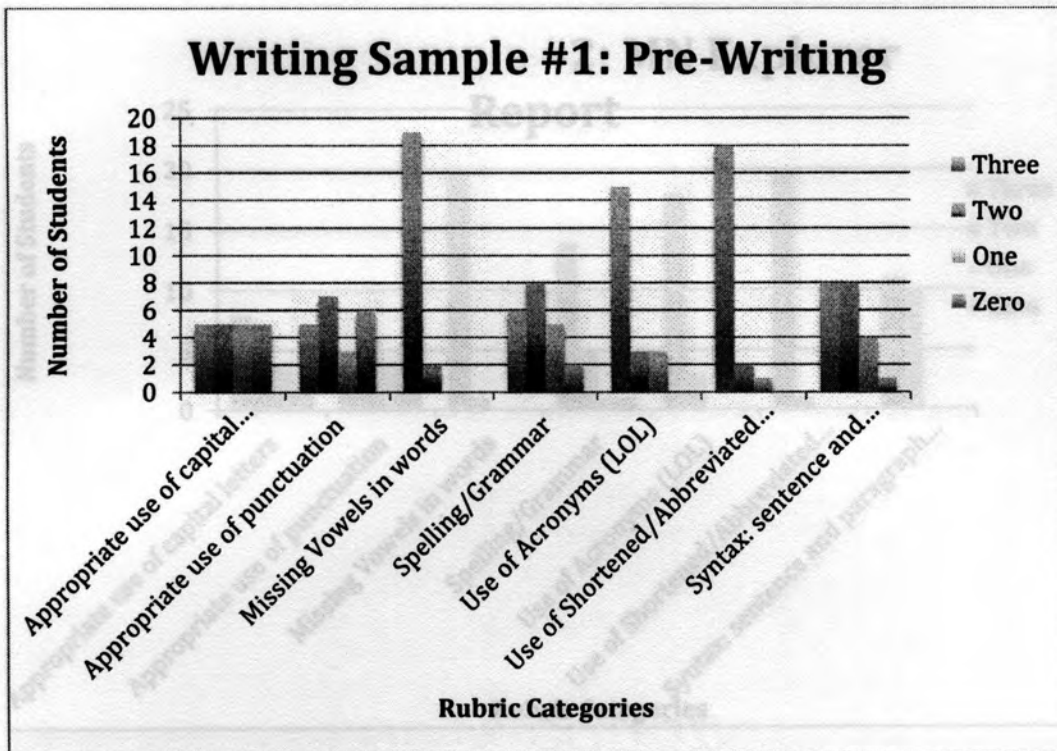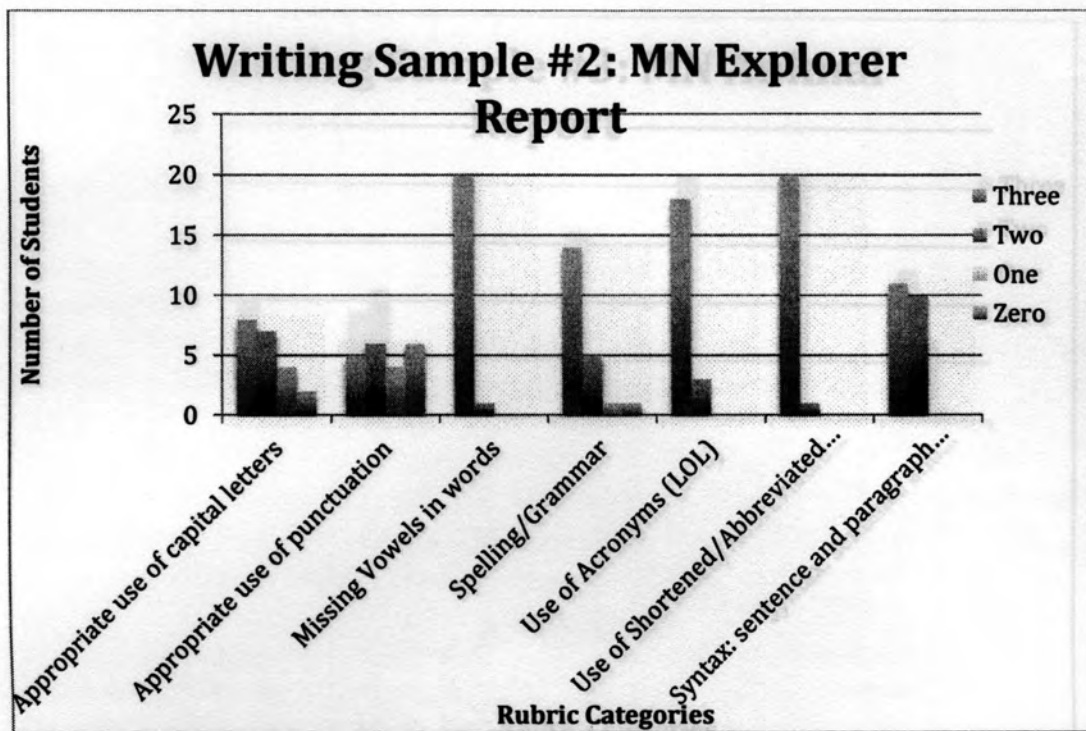7. What do you feel has been the best part about our blogging experience?

APPENDIX C

Student Interview

1. We have been blogging for about 1 month now. How do you like it so far?

2. Do you feel like it has made you a better writer? If yes, how? If no, why not?

3. About how many posts did you make? (approximate)

4. About how many comments did you make?

5. Do you like having your classmates make comments on your work?

6. Did anyone ever comment on your grammar or spelling? How did it make you feel?

7. What do you feel has been the best part about our blogging experience?

Sixth Grade Blogging Data
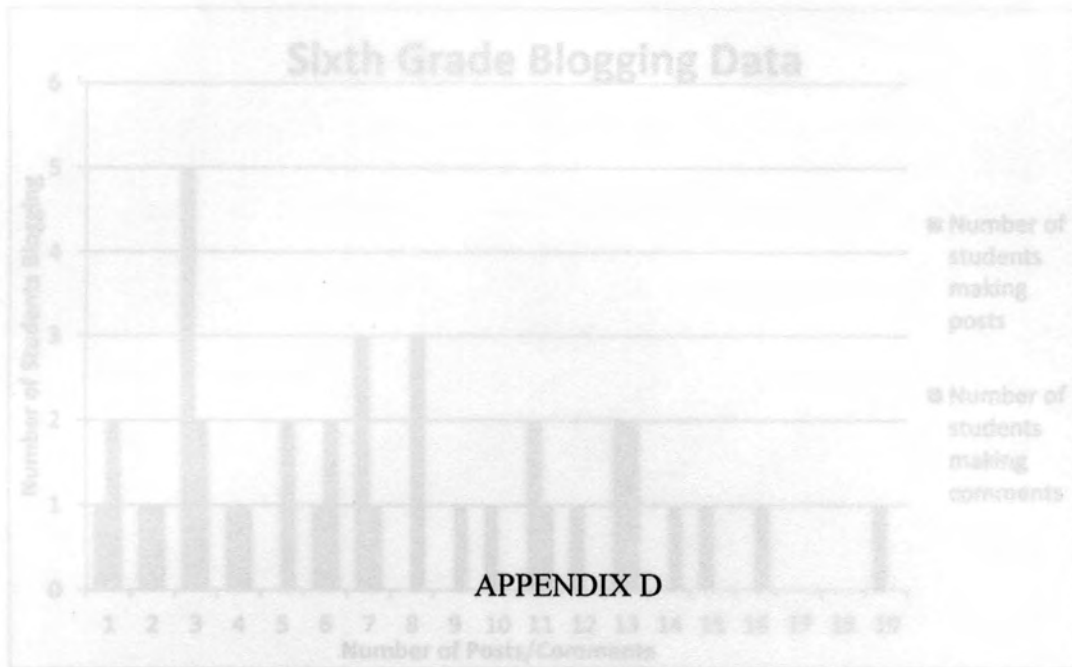
APPENDIX D

Sixth Grade Blogging Data

Sixth Grade Blogging Data

Writing Sample #1: Pre-Writing

APPENDIX E

Writing Samples

Writing Sample #1: Pre-Writing

Writing Sample #2: MN Explorer Report

Writing Sample #3: MN Animal Report

Number of Students vs. Rubric Categories bar chart with legend: Three, Two, One, Zero. Rubric categories: Appropriate use of capital letters, Appropriate use of punctuation, Missing Vowels in words, Spelling/Grammar, Use of Acronyms (LOL), Use of Shortened/Abbreviated..., Syntax: sentence and...

APPENDIX F

Student Participation in Blogging

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Our class will be utilizing blogging the rest of the year as part of our learning and communication. The word 'blog' comes from the words *web* and *log*. A blog is a posting on the Internet, which combines text, images and links to other blogs, or Web pages. Often readers post comments about the blog entry to create an interactive, online discussion.

Blogs are posted on the Internet and are publicly available. They can motivate students to improve and provide them with authentic reasons to write. Students will have access to their blog from home and school. All comments and posts will be teacher monitored. As with all Internet use, student safety and privacy is a top priority.

We will use blogging to develop reading, writing, thinking and critical literacy skills. We may even connect with students around the world. Networking with other students and teachers offers real purpose and audience to student writing. Blogging also allows students to learn about the ethical/legal issues for access to and use of information technologies. There will also be a focus on the importance of developing a positive digital footprint.

All students are asked to follow these guidelines to encourage thoughtful and responsible use of blogs:

1. Keep all personal identification about yourself and others secure. Do not use your full name. Use only first names or initials on posts for yourself and others.
2. Consider the consequences before posting a blog entry. Remember, a person's 'digital footprint' is forever.
3. Respect digital copyright and ownership.
4. Demonstrate Bomber Pride attributes of Positive Attitude, Respect, Integrity, Discipline and Excellence in all blogging interactions.

Following these guidelines will help everyone involved to enjoy a positive, productive blogging experience and reduce the possibility of disciplinary action as outlined in school classroom and Internet-use policies.

Student posts and surveys will be used to measure the effect of blogging on student learning. These findings may be shared with others in the education community.

You will be able to view your child's blog through the school website after you sign and return the Blogging Project Permission Form, below.

By learning together to blog responsibly, students will be better prepared for and to succeed in the digital world of the 21st century.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the Blogging Project, please contact Tracy Fix at 320-396-5177 or tfix@braham.k12.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Tracy Fix
K-6 Technology Teacher

Please tear off and return this section to your child's teacher.

Blogging Project Permission Form
I have read and understood the guidelines outlined in the Student Participation in the Blogging letter and give permission for my child to participate in blogging for the 2014 school year.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____