

Reaching out to Australia

Quad Blogging is an excellent way to share learning with a wider audience and make links with schools across the globe, says ICT co-ordinator Ian Addison.

Have you ever thought about sharing the learning you and your pupils do beyond the classroom? Maybe you already blog with your class and use the blog as a platform to share what is happening in your classroom with an audience of pupils and parents. If so, why not take the next step and share your blog with other schools at home and abroad?

What if we don't have a blog?

If you haven't started a blog, it's very easy to do. Simply visit a blogging site such as www.wordpress.com or www.blogger.com and create an account. Give your blog a name and select your preferred settings and themes. Add the blog link to the school website to help promote it to parents. Think about using blog posts within lessons (blogging works well as a plenary) to showcase the learning you have been doing. Imagine it as a way of showing the little things that happen in class. It's not about visits or school trips, it's more about the Aboriginal artwork or the didgeridoos that children have made. These are the things that parents love to see.

Making connections

Once you have a blog, how do you use it to reach a wider audience and make connections with other schools? The answer is simple: you need a partner to share ideas with. This is where Quad

Blogging comes in. Quad Blogging is a scheme set up by David Mitchell (twitter: @deputymitchell) to promote local blogs to other schools. Since its launch in 2011, it has now reached 70,000 pupils in 35 countries. So how does it work?

To start with, visit the Quad Blogging site – www.quadblogging.net – and fill in the form with your name, school, the age of your pupils and also the country you'd like your partners to be in. This is where the links become exciting. Imagine being able to talk to pupils and teachers in Australia before, during and after your project. This gives your class a whole new group of children to communicate with, and being able to ask questions of a panel of country experts adds a wonderful new dimension to their learning.

How Quad Blogging works

Once the quad has been set up, the schools take turns to be the focus school. So in week one, it will be school one, in week two it will be school two and so on. This rotates around the four schools until the end of term. Once a new term begins, you simply sign up for another quad to mix with a different set of schools. During the school's focus week, the other schools will all visit to leave comments on the posts that have been produced. This helps to drive traffic but will also help to teach children about writing

a good blog post as well as how to write helpful, constructive comments. Often children will be empowered to write better quality blog posts because they have an audience that they know will read them. It takes away that sometimes disheartening feeling that no-one will look at the excellent work that the children have produced.

What starts as a small-scale project that involves leaving a few comments often turns into a way of borrowing ideas from each other. It can also become the start of more communication such as video chats or emails between classes in different countries – just imagine the potential this has for your Australian project! ■

Useful links

How-to guide:
www.undertenminutes.com
 Ian's blog: www.ianaddison.net
 Ian on Twitter: @ianaddison
 An overview of blogging:
www.ianaddison.net/blogging-with-children/

Sample school blogs

www.6d.highlawnprimary.net/
www.y6.ferrylane.net/
www.stjohnsblogs.co.uk/
www.bradfordschools.net/blog/miriamlord/