

ONTARIO BLOGS:

by Paula Boon

For many teachers, integrating technology into the curriculum is daunting. It takes time and brain power to figure out what's new, what's useful, and how to apply it in a classroom.

Take blogs, for example. You may have heard of them. You may know that 'blog' is short for 'Weblog,' a Web-based publication normally consisting of articles that are uploaded to a hosting Web page. You may even subscribe to various blogs or keep your own in your free time. But until this school year, if you wanted to take advantage of the obvious educational potential of blogs, you were on your own. Enter the Education Network of Ontario's exciting online publishing project, Ontario Blogs.

Using this free service, a growing number of Ontario teachers are moving writing assignments and group discussions online, where students are motivated by a real audience and the possibility of comments from their classmates and other registered participants.

What makes Ontario Blogs particularly useful as compared to other free online blogging applications is that participating writers and readers are interacting in a controlled environment. Only teachers have the authority to publish student writing, and they also filter all comments received, ensuring students' online safety.

After registering a class by filling out an online registration form, teachers can go through some quick tutorials to learn to navigate the program blog. There's also a human touch to the program, with Diane Hammond ready to answer all technical questions and Paula Boon regularly posting information and inspiration from the world of

edublogs.

And now, not only can student bloggers receive comments from members of other classes across the province, but several faculties of education are getting involved as well. Some pre-service teachers from Western, Windsor and OISE are becoming mentors to specific high-needs classes, while others will be reading all the blogs and commenting on whatever posts catch their eye.

This all sounds wonderful, you may be thinking, but how exactly could it fit into my established curriculum? Ontario Blogs has

