Using Web 2.0 Technology in the Classroom: Blogging for Motivation

Jennifer Jakubowicz
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract
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Using Web 2.0 Technology in the Classroom:

Blogging for Motivation

By

Jennifer Jakubowicz

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Dr. Gloria E. Jacobs

School of Arts and Sciences
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

How can Web 2.0 technology be used in a classroom to help motivate children to read and write more? Using Web 2.0 technologies such as blogging, in the classroom students are motivated to write and read more. A study was conducted with three participants using a classroom blog to see if they were motivated to write and read more while completing various writing tasks on the blog. The study found the participants were motivated to read; and they wrote more. A few implications were found such as the participation gap, computer experience, and teacher experience with the computer.
Using Web 2.0 Technology in the Classroom: Blogging for Motivation

Using technology in the classroom is very important to help motivate students as well as help teach skills that are necessary in learning (Borshiem, Merrit & Reed, 2009). Kids today are “tech savvy” and are in the “Net Generation” (Williams & Chinn, 2009).

Technology constantly improves and evolves. Web 1.0 technology has moved to Web 2.0. Technology. Web 1.0 technology only allowed the creators/ owners of the website to make changes to it (Greenhow, Robelia & Huges, 2009; Handsfield, Dean & Cielocha, 2009). With Web 2.0 technology, which is the new and improved technology term coined in 2004 (Greenhow, Robelia, & Huges, 2009; Harris & Rea, 2009; Rodgers-Estable, 2009), users of the web-based applications are allowed to collaborate together and be able to change the text, the content, the font, the color of the text, etcetera, of the website. This encourages social interaction from one computer user to another, in addition provides greater opportunity to use higher order thinking skills (Anderson, 2009; Harris & Rea, 2009; Williams & Chin 2009). Using technology in the classroom not only helps students gain social and thinking skills, it also helps them improve skills they already have (Anderson, 2009; Harris & Rea, 2009; Williams & Chin 2008; Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007).

The question is: How can teachers use Web 2.0 technology in classrooms today and what are the benefits? There are many factors that are involved. Further investigation into Web 2.0 technology is needed in order to answer the question. “Teachers who apply these technologies in their classrooms do more than motivate students with the latest cool tool; they prepare students with multiliteracies and for the realities of the technological world” (Borsheim, Merritt, & Reed,
2008, p.87). Multiliteracies according to Borsheim, Merritt and Reed (2008) are digital tools like cell phones, computers, internet, blogs, etcetera, that have impacted the nature of text and how people use and interact with the text. Teaching students how to use technology and the various uses of such technology will help them not only improve their skills in the technology but also help prepare them for the technology they see in the real world. It could help them grow as technology grows.

Theoretical Framework

According to Kucer, literacy is a social act where the languages used are framed by a person’s social identity and “Readers and writers engage in multiliteracies rather than a single literacy” (2009, p. 6). There are many theories which help research the problem. One theory is the Sociocultural Theory. Another theory is the Sociohistorical Theory. According to Greenhow, Robelia and Hughes (2009) “Sociocultural and Sociohistorical theories are based on the assumption that learning derives from participation in joint activities, is inextricably tied to social practices, and is mediated by artifacts over time” (p.248). Kucer defines sociocultural theory as “a focus on the social identities and how various groups use literacy to negotiate and critique their interactions with the world” (2009, p.7). When teachers use technology in their classroom they are promoting social practices with such activities as group Blogs and/or Wikis. Students can collaborate their ideas, and have group discussions via the Web. Students can learn social skills while they use technology similar to video chatting and Skype. This also encourages student motivation. Tim Barlow (2008) used a blog to motivate his students, “By creating a website loaded with interesting content that is regularly updated you have been able to motivate students to learn intrinsically” (p. 48). When students are motivated they want to learn. Another
study found that, “Using the computers as tools for writing, data analysis, communication and research encouraged students to read, write and solve problems more effectively” (Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007, p.318). Students, once motivated, also enjoy learning and are willing to learn new strategies to help them. This leads to the next theory, the Critical Literacy theory.

According to Larson and Marsh (2005), “critical literacy involves interrogating texts in terms of the power dynamics embedded within and reflected by them, in addition to positioning readers and authors as active agents in text creation and analysis” (p.3). The students are the creators of the web 2.0 space they have chosen to use. They do the research, ask questions and answer those questions. They create the text they want in their space(s), as well as maintain their space and environment that allows growth. Students create their text and get to analyze what they create and view comments of others who share the space. This also leads to the New Literacies Theory that explains how students make meaning of texts by many modes of communication (Larson & Marsh, 2009).

The New Literacy Theory is a theory in which students’ ability to decode, encode and make meaning by using many modes of communication including print, videos, photographs, sounds and gestures, all which are mediated by new technologies (Larson & Marsh, 2009, p.68). The technologies students use every day at home and at school help them communicate through different modes of communication. Teachers can use chat rooms and applications such as instant messaging and Kajour to hold classroom discussions. They could also host guest speakers using Skype, a video conferencing application (Gooding, 2009). The guest speaker does not have to be in the same room, town, state, or country of the classroom because using Skype allows the guest speaker to call a video conference with the classroom (Gooding, 2009).
There are many different ways teachers can use technology in the classroom in addition to different activities. By reading a book and having discussions on a blog or Kajour chat, students will learn different decoding strategies as well as encoding strategies.

**Research Question**

The fact that learning literacy is a social practice and given all the technology that children use every day, how can teachers and educators use Web 2.0 Technology in classrooms to help motivate students to read and write more?

**Literature Review**

**Introduction:**

According to Kucer, literacy is a social act where the languages used are framed by a person’s social identity and “Readers and writers engage in multiliteracies rather than a single literacy” (2009, p. 6). Multiliteracies, according to Borsheim, Merritt and Reed (2008) are digital tools like cell phones, computers, internet, blogs, etcetera, that have impacted the nature of text and how people use and interact with the text.

Using technology in the classroom is imperative. Web 2.0 technologies enable the users of the web-based applications to collaborate together and change the text, the content, the font, and the color of the text. This encourages social interaction from one computer user to another in addition to using higher order thinking skills (Anderson, 2009; Harris & Rea, 2009; Williams & Chin 2009; Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007). “Higher order thinking skills are employed when students synthesize information and construct new meaning” (Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007, p.308). Some examples of Web 2.0 technology include: blogs (web-based journals), Wiki,
podcasts, RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication), video conferencing, and social bookmarking and virtual worlds (Barlow, 2008; Gooding, 2008; Harris & Rea, 2009).

“Teachers who apply these technologies in their classrooms do more than motivate students with the latest cool tool; they prepare students with multiliteracies and for the realities of the technological world” (Borsheim, Merritt, & Reed, 2008, p.87). The question is, how can teachers use Web 2.0 Technology in classrooms today to help motivate student learning in reading and writing? Further investigation into Web 2.0 technology is needed in order to answer the question.

**Synthesis of literature**

**Web 2.0 technology in the classroom**

Baron (2001) describes many forms of technology. Before computers, laptops, IPods, automobiles, etcetera, students used more primitive technology such as language and writing. With language came the written word, the invention of paper, pencil, and other inventions (Baron, 2001). Today, most would not consider a pencil technology, but when it was invented it was new technology. Some of the older technologies, such as telegraph and clay slab, but they are also technology (Baron, 2001; Jacobs, 2011). Technology has helped humans evolve. Technology is constantly evolving (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009). As technology evolved so did mankind.

“…..the humble wood pencil underwent several changes in form, greatly expanded its functions, and developed from a curiosity of use to cabinet-markers, artists and note-takers into a tool so universally employed for writing that we seldom give it thought” (Baron, 2001, p. 3).
People use technology every day, whether they realize it or not. “What happens is that once a technology works smoothly and is an integral part of your life we forget it is technology” (Jacobs, 2011, p. 27). Technology has played a major role in our lives, helping people communicate with one another and “changed our relationship with the written words and each other” (Jacobs, 2011, p. 27). “Such changes are in some ways quite heartening; today’s online technologies have young people reading and writing far more than they were 20 years or even a decade ago” (Williams, 2008, p. 682). Technology helps motivate students to read and write more.

Web 2.0 technology is the new and improved technology term coined in 2004 (Greenhow, Robelia, & Huges, 2009; Harris & Rea, 2009; Rodgers-Estable, 2009). Web 2.0 technologies enable the users of the web-based applications to collaborate together and change the text, the content, the font and the color of the text. This encourages social interaction from one computer user to another in addition provides greater opportunity to use higher order thinking skills (Anderson, 2009; Harris & Rea, 2009; Williams & Chin; 2009). Franklin & Van Harmelen (2007) claim, “Web 2.0 encompasses a variety of different meanings that include an increased emphasis on user generated content, data and content sharing and collaborative effort, together with the use of various kinds of social software, new ways of interacting with web-based applications, and the use of the web as a platform for generating, repurposing and consuming content” (p. 4).
Web 2.0 technology has many definitions because it is ever evolving. Educators must learn to embrace new technology that will help motivate their students. Technology is ever changing which is makes it more difficult for teachers to ignore (Albion, 2008). “Students learn to use the computers as tools to learning much as they would use a pencil or paper” (Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007, p. 312).

Increase Motivation by Integrating Web 2.0 Instruction

As Web 2.0 technology continues to evolve, employers and society will expect educators to teach students and have them develop their skills, to become more proficient with the new tools. They will be expected to apply these skills while learning (Albion, 2008). Hazari and North (2009) claim, “As technology continues to become commonly used for global communication and productivity, technology skills must be incorporated by educators in the delivery of curriculum content” (p. 187). One approach being used when implementing Web 2.0 technologies in the classroom is motivation. One study found that, “using the computers as tools for writing, data analysis, communication, and research encouraged students to read, write and solve problems more effectively (Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007, p. 318). In another study conducted, Atkinson (1998) set up three strands of research concerning the relationship between pupil cognitive style with pupil performance, teaching strategy and teacher and pupil motivation with technology. The study was conducted with eight schools selected from 150 schools to begin with (Atkinson, 1998). The study involved eight technology teachers, and 112 15-16 year old students (85 boys and 27 girls) which were then cut to 50 students using a matrix of eight pupil types for the first year in which students studied technology as part of the national curriculum (Atkinson, 1998). Both the teachers and the students were observed on a regular basis.

Questionnaires were given to the students to assess their perception of their enjoyment of
designing and using GCSE technology (p. 187). Some of the teachers used the interventionist approach to teaching students and they found that “the students tended to move very quickly through the design stage to the manufacturing stage” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 187) and they also found that students lost ownership of their projects because the decisions were made by the teacher. Other teachers used the collaboration approach. They found time was given for the teacher and student to discuss ideas, and the design was a collaborative effort where students retained ownership of their project. The project took them longer to complete (p. 187).

Throughout the study students' motivation was constantly observed in addition to teacher motivation. “The data indicated that there was a significant difference (chisquare= 10.257, df=2, p=0.0059) between the number of pupils who achieved poor marks in schools where teachers were observed to be despondent in comparison to schools where teachers were seen to be motivated” (p.191). “… in both of these cognitive style groupings, there were over twice as many demotivated pupils as motivated pupils being taught by demotivated teachers” (p. 192). She also states “although motivation is not a prerequisite to achieving success, success can bring about motivation, which, in turn can lead to further achievement” (p.185). Those students and teachers in this study were motivated because of their interest in the project, as well as their success. Those students and teachers, who were not motivated (demotivated), lacked interest; and were not successful in the project which decreased their motivation. Even before Web 2.0 technology, when this study was conducted, students needed to be motivated to achieve success.

What is motivation? According to Porter, motivation is the force that drives a person to achieve goals they want to accomplish for themselves (2010). Web 2.0 technology in the classroom not only helps motivate students but also reaches students on a different level. It provides for different learning styles and differentiates learning. When using technology,
students learn the skills necessary to use technology and critical thinking skills (Gooding, 2008; Greenhow, Robelia & Huges, 2009).

Another approach to using Web 2.0 in the classroom to gain students’ interest is using Web 2.0 technology as a hook in lessons, to get students interested in the unit, topic or lesson being studied. Teachers can use this technology to build a host of skills such as: higher order thinking skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, creativity and innovation skills, contextual learning skills, collaboration skills and information and media literacy skills in addition to functioning to real life situations (Gooding, 2008, p. 51). “More than 70% of the parents surveyed in the National School Boards Association (2007) report believed that using social network sites would help students improve reading and writing skills, conflict resolutions and social skills” (Greenhow, Robelia, & Huges, 2009, p.251). There are a great number of people who use the internet and other Web 2.0 technologies. Not only students, but their parents use these technologies.

Barlow (2008), incorporated technology into his classroom learning as a tool to help his students learn. “An informal survey showed me that the considerable majority of my students were online almost every day…” (2008, p. 46; Greenhow, Robelia & Huges, 2009). He heard his students talk in the hall about the technology they used; he also used an informal survey. Barlow found his students used many different forms of technology at home and including internet sites like MySpace, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and more. He decided to create a blog for his high school science students, but this attempt failed. He thought his students would visit the blog, have discussions about their learning with each other and the teacher. It lacked color and was uninspiring. He decided to try creating a blog for a science unit. This unit gave students a choice of what they wanted to research and what they wanted to learn with practical activities and
homework tasks. They also had to present their project to the class (p.46). “By giving students a choice about what they wanted to research they held ownership of their learning and this motivated them to achieve” (p.46). This blog was a success.

The results of this study show that blogging was “intrinsically motivating students to learn more about science” (Barlow, 2008, p.47). The blog hits (number of visits) showed how many students read the blog as well as their comments, discussions and student work. With assessments the teacher found improvement in student work and motivation. He then created another blog with interesting new information and facts about the science related event happening around the world. He provided hyperlinks to enable his students to learn more about a particular topic. The number of hits from this blog from just one class of 16 students was 75 hits. After giving the website to three more classes and writing it on the back of his lab coat, the number of hits shot up from 75 hits in July to 1,502 hits in December. Students were checking out the blog at school, at home and even at friends houses (Barlow, 2008). Students were motivated to learn through the use of a blog.

**Forms of Web 2.0 technology that could be used in classroom**

Web 2.0 technology can be applied in the classroom in various ways and forms. One form of technology used in some classrooms is a SMARTboard or Digital whiteboard (Labbo, Love & Ryan, 2007). “Digital whiteboards are electronic dry erase boards that serve as an interactive touch screen/monitor when connected to a computer” (Labbo, Love & Ryan, 2007, p. 583). Students can save their work, gain access to the internet, print, create new documents, etc, on the SMARTboard. It is similar to using a regular computer in a touch screen format. Special markers are used on the SMARTboard for drawing or writing ideas on previously created
documents (Labbo, Love, & Ryan, 2007). Students can use the SMARTboard for various
lessons, while interacting with one another.

Labbo, Love and Ryan (2007) evaluated teachers in a study group who wanted to know
how they could improve their students’ vocabulary knowledge and help them retain their
learning. The rational is to use technology as multiple modes and forms of meaning-making to
enhance children’s literacy acquisition by making the content memorable (2007). With this in
mind they created five days worth of lessons and used the Digital Language Experience
Approach or also known as the D-LEA. “This approach suggested that students of all ability
levels can learn how to sequence events, generate high quality oral language, and use highly
descriptive vocabulary when they discussed digital photos and arranged them in presentation
software.” (p. 583). Students were given vocabulary that they needed to know; the teacher read
the story aloud to them. After following up on the vocabulary, students used cameras to create
images to represent meanings of the words in their vocabulary lists. They used the digital board
to create stories and sequence the reading using their vocabulary words from their reading. The
researcher of this study found this approach worked. Students remembered their vocabulary
words and were able to use them in conversations, and in their writings. The teachers in the study
were pleased with the results (2009). The students were not only motivated to learn the
vocabulary words; they found meaning in the work they were doing while staying engaged.

There are other ways to apply Web 2.0 technology into the classroom.

Blogging is another technology that is used in some classrooms. Blogs or web logs,
similar to journal logs or diaries but instead of using pen and paper to write in a journal, they are
posted on the Internet (Churchill, 2009; Rogers-Estable, 2009; Barlow, 2008; Gooding, 2008;
Zawilinski, 2009). Boiling, Casteck, Zawilinski, Barton and Nierlich (2008) describe blogging as
websites that allow individuals to easily create their own personal webpage with pictures, text, graphics, videos and other multimedia. Read & Fisher (2006) state: “Blogs (short for weblogs) are online journals-a series of archived Internet postings, some of which contain hypertext links to websites and other blogs” (p. 38). A blog typically consists of a header and two to three columns with the center column consisting of the home to the most recent post by the author while the comments (replies or responses to the author’s posts) can be found under each post (Zawilinski, 2009, p.651). Boiling, Casteck, Zawilinski, Barton and Nierlich (2008) also discuss the difference between blogs and websites. People leave comments and engage in an online conversation. “Because the blogging format encourages students to engage with positions divergent from their own, blogging can potentially enhance analytic and critical thinking skills” (Ellison & Wu, 2008, p. 105). Being able to have online conversations and reading subscriber’s comments helps students with social interactions, in addition to strengthens writing and reading skills.

Churchill (2009) discusses using blogs to support teaching. The study was done over a semester with postgraduate students studying information technology in education. The researcher created a blog and “students were accessing course material, posting reflections, featuring artifacts created through the learning tasks, commenting on each other’s contributions and otherwise participating on a regular basis throughout the semester” (p.179). The blog was monitored regularly and students were asked to assess their learning and use of the blog on a five point scale. Students felt encouraged to blog with each other as well as when the teacher facilitated blogging activities. Students felt they learned more using the blog then when they did not use technology in the classroom. “This study demonstrated that blogs can be effective educational technology and useful blog-based activities for learning are: (1) reading blogs of
others, (2) receiving comments and (3) previewing tasks of others and reading feedback received in relation to these” (Churchill, 2009, p. 183).

Another study done in a college classroom was an “exploratory investigation into how instructors and students can capitalize on the unique communicative capabilities of blogging” (Ellison & Wu, 2008, p.100). The participants of this study were upper level undergraduate students taking a non required course in a large Midwestern university, with a focus on the social impacts of new communication (2008). There were more males in this study than females and they all were primarily Caucasian. The researchers collected data during a fall semester. Students completed a series of five short writing assignments that were graded with six writing opportunities, over the course of the semester. Additional writing assignments were not used for a grade. Out of the five graded writing assignments, three were handed in hard copy. The remaining assignments were posted online as blog entries on their own created blogs. The URL of the blogs was put into ANGEL, a management system used for the course (2008). Since the class was large, students were randomly put into groups of eight and exchanged URLs of their respective blogs. Students read each other’s blogs and had to make comments on two of the writing pieces posted on the blogs. As students completed an assignment, they were given a survey. If they filled it out and handed it in, they received extra credit. The survey consisted of demographic information, student’s perceptions of the assignment and the blog, behavioral questions and comprehension questions. Students were given writing prompts for their writing assignments which followed a similar format each time they had an assignment. The format they used required students to “demonstrate familiarity with the assigned reading for that day, synthesize the readings to some degree, and include their opinion in their response” (p. 110). The results from this study show reading other students’ blogs was significantly more helpful than
reading other students’ comments on one’s own blog (p.111). Also many students have never
used a blog before making this a new and exciting experience and making it uniquely engaging
for students in a way traditional hard copy papers were not. One student made a comment
“Something new, and different, writing on a blog page is better than writing a standard essay
type hand-in paper” (p.112). Not only did the blog provide new experiences, it allowed students
to view each other’s work, sharing different perspectives and responses. Students were able to
work outside the classroom. Regarding feedback on their writing piece from their colleagues,
some students had negative feelings toward the comments that were made to their blog. Students
found being required to write comments on other students’ work, to be stressful and aggravating.
Others enjoyed certain aspects of the blog, citing the convenience of the blogging, being able to
use a less formal voice, and the interactivity inherent in the assignments (2008).

In another study one fourth grade teacher, asked her students to write reader responses in
a binder, she found that they wrote responses the way she would want them to respond. She
created a private blog that only her account could add posts to the blog. The students used her
account to access the blog and to post their reader’s responses. Her “goal in using blogs was to
position herself as a participant in ongoing discussions about literature, rather than as the sole
audience and evaluator of students as both authors and critical readers of these student-produced
texts” (Handsfield, Dean & Cielocha, 2009, p.45). She modeled a post on her blog and then
encouraged her students to explore the blog. Students began to use the blog for their reader’s
responses. The blog encouraged social interaction and collaboration. Students began to comment
on each other’s posts in addition to making comments to their posts. Students also started making
connections and asking each other questions in the comments section. “The blog also afforded
opportunities for language development within authentic conversations, which can be
particularly helpful for English Language Learners (ELLS)” (p. 46). She determined her blog also had limits. Students could not create their own space and profile, and it had a limited audience. Students often responded to her, and not to the other students. She decided that next year, she would sign up each student for their own Gaggle.net account, which her district recently signed up for. This would allow her students to have access to emails, chats, and blogs and create their own space. She was still willing to use Web 2.0 technology and blogging even though this blog did not reach her goal. She saw improvement with language development and her students were engaged in their work.

Barlow, (2008) in his study, used a blog to help motivate his high school science students. He attempted a blog that was plain, had little color and was uninspiring. The first blog was a failure, his students would visit the blog but not as often as he would have liked. They also wrote comments but not what his was looking for. One comment he received was: “Hi Mr. Barlow. I was on an excursion today. What was the homework?” (p.46).

Barlow wanted things to change so he listened to students in the hallways, conducted an informal survey and found his students were using many different types of internet sites like MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Blogger, and others. With this information, he decided to create another blog for a unit in science. This unit allowed students a chance to choose what they wanted to learn with practical activities, homework and they were able to present their work to their class. “By giving students a choice about what they wanted to research and they held ownership of their learning and this motivated them to achieve” (Barlow, 2008, pg.46). The second attempt at blogging was a success. Students were motivated to do the work when they were given a choice. They learned beyond the curriculum because the students were interested in
learning. They were focused to learn because their work was accessible and they were being extrinsically motivated as a result of this experience (p. 46).

He decided to create another blog which had links to related topics and it talked about current issues around the world. He kept it up to date. In July he had 75 hits on this blog by December he had 1502 hits to the blog. The results show students were motivated to use the blog and continued to use it. The teacher also had many conversations with his students that showed him the students were learning about science outside the classroom (p. 47).

Another study was conducted in a high school math classroom to investigate how one mathematics classroom teacher effectively integrated classroom blogging in his classroom as a pedagogical tool. The researchers first looked for classroom blogs doing a web search. They found 17 different classroom blogs which they narrowed down with the following criteria: “(1) the blog must be created and maintained by high school teachers; (2) it must be frequently updated (several times a week); (3) there must be high levels of student involvement and contributions with the students voices being dominant; and lastly it must be publicly available to afford access to the different ways the blogs were being used” (MacBride & Luehmann, 2008, p.174). They chose a blog for an 11th grade pre-calculus mathematics class. The study took a year to conduct. The researchers collected student work from the blog, and conducted a structured interview using Skype (a video conferencing application) with the teacher to assess the teacher’s primary intentions and his goals for this blog (p.174.). This allowed the researchers to ask the interview questions while looking over the blog and allowed the researchers to ask any additional questions on using the blog.

The teacher had students take turns writing a post that discussed what happened in class. This helped those students who were absent to get caught up on the material and helped those
students who had trouble with the material. It also provided repeat exposure to the material. “The resulting student constructed posts often included notes, example problems, and highlights of class discussions” (p.175). The teacher also asked students to check the previous day’s posts before coming to class. He used the blog for many different types of posts which included: reflected writing (students wrote reflections addressed to their peers writing about their concerns and outcomes for each unit)(p.177); the editor’s initiative (students were given the opportunity to fulfill their “reflection before the test” assignment by identifying and discussing mistakes or omissions made in the posts for the unit); Sunday game post (this post was not a required post but consisted of the teacher every Sunday night posting a new puzzle or problem solving game that needed to be solved)(p.178); Digital Stories (students were asked to write a story that had a mathematics problem in the story for their classmates to solve and discuss with each other) and he used his blog for collaborative learning (p.179). Also on his blog he included Chat boxes (these allowed the students to post comments to each other and is similar to instant messaging); sharing of resources (he provided his students with mathematic resources, and students contributed to the list by adding any links they found that would be helpful); Del.icio.us Account (a free social networking service that each student signed up for, which allowed students to share collections of internet based resources) and a visitors map (used to locate geographic origins of visitors (p.178).

The teacher used the blog to (1) increase collaborative learning and have a nurturing community of learners; (2) create a student-centered learning environment; (3) provide a place for reflection and (4) provide enrichment to the class (p. 179). The results from this study demonstrated how the blog helped students challenge each other, learn from each other as well as increase interactions between teacher and the students and between students through the use of
the blog (2008). The research also showed the benefits of creating a blog. “Blogging allows students to have a real audience, and thus can motivate students to do their best work” (p.181). Since the audience is not limited to students in the classrooms, the research demonstrates students raise the quality of their work when they use the blog. “In their responses to their perceptions of the value of the blog, many students described their pride in, ownership of and motivation toward constructing a “textbook for the world”” (p.181). This leads to the decisions the teacher makes to have the blog public for anyone to access, or private to protect their students by allowing only the students in the class and the teacher to be able to access the blog. This is a significant factor on whether or not the blog is beneficial.

The results indicate the teacher effectively integrated the blog into his classroom by using the blog routinely. Students were able to learn not just in the classroom, but outside the classroom as well. They challenged each other and worked collaboratively to work on and fix problems. Students edited their previous posts and added new information; and they reflected on what they learned. The use of this blog capitalized on students’ cultural literacies by allowing and encouraging “students to bring their media literacies to bear on their mathematics learning” (p.182). This blog required a great deal of planning to create in addition to decision making to include student’s strengths and weaknesses. Benefits from a blog depend a great deal on how the blog is structured.

There are various types of blogs. There are classroom blogs (blogs used to share classroom news to students and parents), mirror blogs (allows bloggers to reflect on their thinking), showcase blogs (showcases student work, with a combination of teacher and student writing), and literature response blogs (students respond to a prompt) (Zawilinski, 2009, p.652). Teachers can create classroom pages using blogs. Students can find out what homework they
have, what unit they are studying, and teachers can provide websites that may help them. One fourth grade teacher uses her class blog to get her students motivated and engaged, to participate in online discussions (Boling, Castek, Zawilinski, Barton & Nierlich 2008). The results showed the students clearly liked the blog. They seemed to be engaged and motivated to keep working when they used the blog. Another teacher in the study used blogs to communicate with another school in a different country. His students would take pictures of where they lived, what the weather was like, etcetera, and post them and the other class would do the same. They students would make comments and have discussions with each other (2008). Zawilinski (2009) also states in her article, “Blogging is an easy way to begin preparing elementary students for the new literacies of the internet” (p. 650). If teachers begin preparing students early on, using technology in the classroom then as they get older, and as technology progresses, it will be easier for the student to adapt ever-evolving technologies.

Other technologies similar to blogging are Instant Messaging (IM), and Wiki’s. Instant Messaging (IM) allows online synchronous discussions using the internet and IM software, a person from one computer can communicate with another person on a different computer (Gooding, 2008). Students who use IM often use short fragmented sentences, emoticons (symbols do noting emotion), symbols, abbreviations and initialisms. Example: “j/k” for just kidding (Jacobs, 2008). Instant messaging is the most common communication service (Gooding, 2008). Wikis, according to Albert L. Harris and Alan Rea (2009), are “a collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone with access to contribute or modify content, using a simplified markup language, and is often used to create collaborative Websites,” (p.138) They allow peer review, group work on projects, uploading assignments and course updates. The most commonly known wikis is Wikipedia (2009). Wikis are interactive, allowing individual users to
edit or enter material in real time and have their contributions published instantly (Gooding, 2008). These technologies can be used to create group discussion and student self reflections.

Another form of technology used in the classroom is Podcasting. Podcasts can be audio, graphic which include PowerPoint’s or full video (Harris & Rea, 2009). Subscribers can upload and save to MP3 players, IPods, and computers (Rogers-Estable, 2009). There are many free MP3 digital software sites on the internet that teachers can use to create their own digital file. Podcasts can be used on most computers and handheld devices such as MP3 and even cell phones, and are portable anywhere (Putnam & Kingsley, 2009). Programs like Audacity are free audio recorders and can help teachers record their lesson, upload it and have the podcast available to all students online (Gooding’s 2008; Harris & Rea, 2009; Rogers-Estable, 2009). Teachers can reach their students outside the walls of the classroom and extend their students’ learning beyond the traditional school schedule (Putnam, & Kingsley, 2009). S. Michael Putnam and Tara Kingsley (2009) also state: “…podcasts have now become more common and there are numerous examples of teachers and students from kindergarten through high school using them to enhance learning” (p.101). Lankshear & Knobel (2007), state “In our view, someone who ‘freezes’ language as a digitally encoded passage of speech and uploads it to the internet as a podcast is engaging in literacy” (p. 225). Barlow (2008) also suggests using the Podcast and explains how it helped motivate students. He would hear his students talking in the hall about something interesting they learned from the Podcast. He concluded by saying; “By embracing technological tools, such as weblogs and podcasts that are used routinely by my digital native students I have been able to reach them beyond the usual confines of a classroom” (p. 48). With Web 2.0 technology teachers can teach anywhere, especially now with Podcasts.
One high school science teacher used Podcasts to help his students understand the material that was taught in class, as well as “reinforce and extend information on vocabulary that had presented challenges to students in prior years through repeated exposure to the terms and concepts” (Putman & Kingsley, 2009, p.100). The teacher used a song in the beginning of each podcast as a hook to get his students into the podcast. The teacher worked collaboratively with another teacher to create the podcasts. Each week they would look at the vocabulary in the upcoming units and create a script for their podcasts. The format consisted of a “hook,” usually a song to introduce the podcast, a review of vocabulary words in the introduction, questions in the review that would require students to mentally recall the definitions of prior words, and introduction of new vocabulary words, and common class definitions. Passages that included the new vocabulary words reinforced the definitions of the new words and activities reassuring students to pause the podcast, to work on a vocabulary task were also included (2009). Finally, scripts were handed out to each student to have a copy of what they would be listening too. This study was conducted in seven weeks with a pretest of 22 multiple choice science terms and a post test that assessed all the vocabulary words in the unit. Half of the class used the podcasts to learn the vocabulary words and the other half created flash cards and used other strategies in the classroom to learn the science terms which were used for review and kept in individual student binders (p.103). A survey was conducted on those who had access to the podcasts. The results of this study showed “an increase in scores on the vocabulary test for the group given access to the podcasts was significantly greater than those in the group that received only classroom instruction” (p.104). Students who had the podcasts also said they were more motivated to learn science vocabulary and 86% of students indicated that the podcasts helped them learn their science vocabulary (p.104). This study shows us that podcasts work. Students and teachers can
create a podcast. This is one method in the 21st century that teachers can use to help their students in an educationally sound and class related content way like never before (2009).

Another study was conducted at a University with 50 nursing students, in their third-year baccalaureate program in a medical surgical course (Beard & Morote, 2010). “Students were assigned a chapter to read and asked to listen to a podcasted lecture on caring for clients with visual impairments, prior to class” (Beard & Morote, 2001, p. 186). They were given a multiple choice seven questions pretest survey at the beginning of the next class that addressed aspects of what they read and heard from their podcasted lecture. After this pretest students were given a hard copy of the story and had a discussion. After their discussion students were given the same test as a post test. The results showed 80% of the students stated on the survey that they preferred to listen to the podcasted lectures rather than read the texts. Some students even made comments about the text book stating it was hard and tedious to read (2010). These studies demonstrate no matter their age, listening to podcasts helps students learn the material, motivates them to continue to learn.

Students and teachers can create their own podcasts to share; all they need is a computer, with access to the internet and such tools an Audacity, a script which they have practiced and a way to record their podcasts (Gooding 2008; Harris & Rea, 2009; Rogers-Estable, 2009; Putman & Kingsley, 2009). Teachers who want to create a podcast for their students and want the podcasts to be beneficial, should: (1) let the podcast be informal (add sound effects, jokes once in a while, songs, pauses for dramatic effect); (2) link the podcasts to previous discussions and lessons in class; and (3) include opportunities for students to stop and apply their knowledge (Putman & Kingsley, 2009, p.105). Once the podcasts are recorded, they must be uploaded and hosted somewhere on the web (Gooding, 2008). Once uploaded, they can be accessed and
downloaded to MP3 players, computers, IPods, and more. Students can also create their own podcasts the same way teachers can. “Students with the equipment and skills and do class projects or work as podcasts that other students can then download” (Rogers-Estable & Greenwhich, 2009, p.58). Students need to have the skills of operating a computer, accessing the internet, and have the skills and ability to create, upload and publish their podcasts.

Knowing there are positive and negative implications in addition to the different types of Web 2.0 technology, how do teachers apply it into classrooms so students will be motivated to learn?

Teachers have to be careful when using these tools to make sure work is authentic (Students own work they created) and take the time to discuss, integrity, ethics, and honesty, including plagiarism and copyright violations (Albion, 2008).

“One motivation for such developments will be to provide environments that mitigate some of the risks associated with having students engage in activities on the open Web, but it may be equally useful to adapt tools to provide specific support for educational activities or to create new tools, or mashups (combinations of existing tools), for specific tasks.” (Albion, 2008, p. 188).

Teachers can set their blogs to private so only those allowed to make comments and posts can view or add anything to the blog. This also protects the privacy of the students as well. Another tool that supports educational activities is a Del.icio.us Account which allows subscriber’s access to links that other members have used (MacBride & Luehmann, 2008).
Teachers can show examples of authentic work and can create a list of resources their students could use when working on projects. The lists could be added to a blog or handed out in class.

**Challenge of using Web 2.0 technology in the classroom**

There are a few challenges incorporating Web 2.0 technology in the classroom. Teachers have to learn how to use the technology like SMARTboards, blogs, wikis, podcasts, etcetera, and be able to have time to create their blogs in order to use them in the classroom. “….the best way for teachers to learn about Web 2.0 may be through learning with Web 2.0 as authentic practice that can inform their planning and implementation of learning activities” (Albion, 2008, p.195). A challenge for teachers using wikis or blogs, is determining who is actually participating in group discussions, putting forth the effort to work with the groups, and contributing information on the web (Harris & Rea, 2009). Teachers found having students use different colors helps them to see who is participating (2009). Teachers need to ensure student work is authentic. (2009). Kemker, Barron and Harmes (2007), express “Authentic Instruction is based on the premise that students’ work in the classroom should prepare them for intellectual tasks that will be demanded of them as adults” (p. 307).

Another challenge once the technology is set up, is ensuring that everyone has access to it. According to Greenhow, Robelia and Huges (2009), “Internet connectivity in schools, homes, neighborhoods and communities has become increasingly pervasive” (p. 246). Due to socio-economic status often, lower income students may not have the resources necessary at home to use the technology like blogs for their homework. This is known as the participation gap (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2006; Jacobs 2011). According to Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma Robison and Weigel, the “participation gap is the unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in
the world of tomorrow” (2006, p.3). Some students may not have computers or have no access to the internet (Harris & Rea, 2009). It is usually the wealthy who have access to resources like computers and the internet with easy access. Those who are less fortunate in the lower class have a harder time getting these resources and if they do have computers they are usually out of date and may not have access to premium Internet service (Jacobs, 2011). Another definition “the participation gap refers to whether people are simply consumers of internet content or whether they contribute actively to the creation of online content” (Jacobs, p. 23, 2011). If teachers use Web 2.0 technology like wikis and class blogs for homework, those students who do not have the necessary resource will not be able to complete the assignment and may feel left out of the classroom community.

A further challenge is, Internet safety issues-parents worry about their children using the internet and the sites chosen by the teacher. Predators who use the internet are a valid concern especially with Social and Interactive sites. Teachers will have to talk to students about safety. One way to avoid predators is by creating pseudonym names or codenames for students when creating a blog or wiki so no one knows who the students are but the teacher and themselves. It protects their privacy in addition to giving them the chance to create any name they want to use, encouraging them to be more involved and motivated in the process. Teachers will also have to show and explain to the parents which sites they are visiting, what the students are going to be doing on such websites, and why they are using the website or application the teacher is using.

Lastly teachers may experience technological difficulties when implementing the technology in their classroom. Teachers may need to go to professional development classes or take computer classes to help them use this technology in their classroom. Teachers need to learn how to use Web 2.0 technology before they use it in their classroom (Rogers-Estable, 2009,
Dean, & Cielocha, 2009). If the teacher does not know how to use the technology then how could they expect their students to learn how to use the technology that is being applied to their learning? “Teachers still do not have an environment, culture, support, time or skills to effectively establish ways for technology to enhance their ultimate goal: to improve student learning” (Schrum, & Glassett, 2006, p53). Teachers also have to ask their school district what technology they have to offer use in the classroom, and if they provide any professional development classes for teachers to learn the new technology. Most schools have technical staff or a lab tech that teachers can turn to for questions as well as train for technologies (Rogers-Estable, 2009; Rosenfeld, 2008). Others may not have the funds to hire a technology teacher or the right tools and equipment to show teachers how to use the technology. “New teachers need further training on the instructional values and uses of technology and how to integrate it into everyday teaching” (Rosenfeld, 2008, p.158). Teachers need programs that will help them improve their technical skills and help them become familiar with the technology. Programs that urge teachers to ‘use the technology’ and only talk about the mechanics of using the computer mostly result in failure to integrate technology into the classroom (McVee, Bailey & Shanahan, 2008). McVee, Bailey and Shanahan (2008) also state: “Because of the vast variations and complexities of digital technology, a classroom rich in literacy and technology integration must depend on distributed knowledge” (p.208). With better resources, professional development classes, and technical staff willing to provide technology classes for teachers, integration of technology in the classroom may begin to happen more consistently. All of this research finally leads us to the focus of this paper.

**Method**
Context

This research was conducted at a small college in Western NY, in a classroom and computer lab. This study was conducted as part of a tutoring program run by the literacy program at the college. The classroom has a total of six students but only three will be the subjects of this study. Another teacher is in the classroom tutoring the other three students. Students went once a week to the computer lab down stairs directly below the classroom. The computer lab is an open computer lab with college students coming in and out as they please. At any given time there are about six to eight college students in the computer lab. The computer lab consists of eight rows with three computers at each row. There is one instructor computer at the front of the room. Students used this lab to access and work on blog created by me using blogger.com.

Participants

There were three participates in this study, Biker, Colts and Littlest Petshop (all pseudonyms selected by the participants). Each participant attends a different school in the Western New York area. Each participant is in the literacy center for tutoring because they are below grade level in reading, writing and/or word study. Many of the participants also receive services in their school such as working with a reading teacher or resource teacher. This program provides extra support in reading, writing and word study to help students achieve their goals. Biker and Littlest Petshop worked together last semester in the same tutoring group. Colts has not worked with any of the other participants.

Biker (a pseudonym) lives with his mother, father and younger sister in Western New York. Biker is a seven years and ten month old, Caucasian male. He enjoys skiing in the winter and biking on trails with his family in the summer. He is currently attending an Elementary
School near his home. He is in second grade with a reading level of I, equivalent to a first grade reading level. He struggles in reading, writing and word study. He is eager to learn and is willing to do what it takes to achieve his goals. Sometimes he is hard on himself because he wants to reach his goal, and feels when he struggles he is not reaching his goal. To help with his reading skills he is working with a reading specialist and he attends the local college’s tutoring program where college students are practicing what they have learned and apply it in a tutoring session. Biker practices writing, reading and word study in tutoring. His parents read with him and write with him every night.

Colts is an eight year and five months old, Caucasian male. His parents are recently divorced, and share custody of him. He spends half the time with his mother and the other half with his father. He is currently attending second grade at a private elementary school in Western New York, located near his home. He loves sports; his favorite sport is football and his favorite football team is the Colts. His mother states at times he has trouble focusing in school. She also states that he struggles in reading, writing and spelling. He is reading at a level J instructionally, equivalent to the beginning level of second grade. She also states that he has a great memory. He connects better when reading a book with pictures. Both parents read with Colts every night. In school he has a reading teacher who works with him during reading to help work on reading strategies.

The last participant is Littlest Petshop. Littlest Petshop is an eight year and five months old, Caucasian, female. She lives with her mother, father and twin brother in Western New York. She is currently attending a local elementary school and is in second grade. She is very creative, energetic and loves animals. She enjoys spending time with her friends and family. She has trouble with reading, writing and spelling. Her current instructional reading level is I, equivalent
to an ending first grade reading level. She goes to reading class during reading time in school. She is also attending the local college’s tutoring program where college students are practicing what they have learned and applying it in a tutoring session. Littlest Petshop practices writing, reading and word study in tutoring. She has attended the tutoring sessions the past three semesters.

Each participant went through an application process and recommendation process in which their teacher recommended them to the literacy center at the college for more support. The program then chose participants based on the needs of the student and the program. The program has a limited number of available spaces due to the number of college students taking the course and the needs of each college student. Students who have been in the program before and want continual program support are given preference as well as brothers and sisters of previous participants. Any spots left are filled by new students who are chosen by the board. Students who are accepted are placed in groups by grade level as well as being close to the same reading levels, if not the same reading levels.

There are two practicum classes for each college student in the Literacy Master’s Program. If students are in the birth through 12th grade certification program, one practicum will be with a student or students in the primary grades and in the second practicum they will be working with a student or students in the intermediate grades. If students are in the birth through sixth grade program or the fifth through 12th grade program they will receive students in both practicums by their certification grade levels.

In the first practicum, college students usually work with a group of two to three students. In the second practicum, practicum students usually will work with an individual literacy center student. The professors of the practicum courses are given the names of their
college students and the names of the participants in the literacy program. Participants in the program are already grouped. Some participants will be working one on one with a tutor and others will be working with a group. I was given my students based on my needs of working with a group of students in the primary level.

Before starting the blog I wanted to determine if the participants have used a computer before and what, if any their computer experience was. This may have an impact on their motivation because if they have not used the computer before they may become frustrated and unmotivated to continue on with the blog. All three of them have used a computer before. They use their computers to play games, and do school work. Biker uses the computer once or twice a week at school and at home. He uses the computer mostly to write stories. Littlest Petshop has her own computer which she uses to play games, chat with friends using video chat, and for everything because it is fun. Colts has his own computer and uses it to play games and load music his MP3 player.

**Researcher Stance**

As a researcher and teacher, I worked one-on-one some of the time with each participant but most of the time, I conducted group work. I will be the teacher first then, the researcher. I have not known the participants very long. I just started working with them in the literacy program. The first time I met with the students and started working with them was February 1, 2011. I received their names and phone numbers two week before I worked with them. I called each participants’ parents, explaining who I was and what I would be doing with their child over the semester. I was able to gain some background information from the parents. The first time I met with the students was also the first time I met with the parents at the time of this study.
I was a graduate student at St. John Fisher College, working to obtain a Master’s Degree in Literacy and have a Bachelor’s Degree in Childhood and Special Education. While also working towards a certificate in Literacy, I have a certification in Childhood Education. I am participating in the Literacy Center as part of my master’s program.

**Research Method**

During this study, I conducted research on the motivational effects blogging in the classroom has on reading and writing. To complete this research I collected information and data from a variety of places. I gave each student a questionnaire about using the computer and blogging (See Appendix A for the questionnaire). I collected the questionnaire and chose students to conduct interviews with. I interviewed each participant asking deeper questions about what motivates them, their computer experience and what they have used the computer for (See Appendix B for Interview Questions). Students were able to pick their own “code names” (pseudonym name) to protect their privacy. Students worked with the researcher on reading, writing and word study. Once a week they worked on the blog creating a story, creating a writing topics list, reading each participant’s stories, writing comments to one another on the blog and reading each comment.

I created the blog and titled it Jane Doe’s blog (a pseudonym) using Blogger.com. It is set to the highest private settings available. Only the participants, their parents and I know the password and the username. I provided a prompt, usually a funny picture, for students to create stories and write them on the blog. I also had students listen to a book being read and answer reading response questions on the blog. I posted the writing prompt on the blog and the participants used the comments sections to write their story. The final post, I typed up for the participants. It was a story they had written the class before and I put each story in a post. The
participants were able to edit their stories, add to their stories if they wanted and publish their post. Students wrote comments to each other’s stories in the comments section. Each blogging session lasted between 30 to 40 minutes and each observation lasted an hour and 45 minutes.

Students used the downstairs computer lab to work on their blog. Being a class blog each participant had access to it. Each student was on their own computer. I modeled expected behavior and walked around to provide any help or answer any questions. When students wrote a response to the writing prompt, they wrote in the comments section. They used their pseudonym names first, then pressed the enter key to begin writing their responses. This let me know who was writing which story and who made comments on the blog. I observed how much the students wrote, their attitudes toward the blog, their moods, what they said, how they reacted to writing on the blog, their reactions to the comments made, parent expressions, participant motivation and what they were doing before, during, and after the blog (See Appendix C for Field Notes Form). They discussed what they wrote with each other after writing on the blog. Students created stories to pictures and answered writing prompts on the blog. Students also read each blog comment to practice reading. Through their blogging I used what I observed and took field notes. Since the participants are young I modeled what was expected of each participant. I also facilitated group discussions.

I collected data from field observations, questionnaires and interviews, and used the participant’s assessments and work. Once the four weeks were completed for the blog, I had students fill out a post blog questionnaire (See Appendix D for Post Blog Questionnaire). I also gave their parents a similar questionnaire to fill out (See Appendix E for Post Blog Questionnaire for Parents).

Quality and Credibility of Research
In conducting this research and any research, it is important to ensure the quality and credibility of the study. According to Mills (2007) credibility is “referred to as the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that occur during a study and to deal with patterns that may be difficult to explain” (p. 104). To ensure this research is credible, I took field notes on my observations, and worked with a critical colleague to conduct member checks where I debriefed and reflected on the progress of the study (Mills). Another strategy used to assure credibility is practicing triangulation (Mills). I used multiple sources of data instead of relying on just one form of data (Mills). I used many forms to collect my data. One form of data I used is a research made questionnaire. The participants answered questions about using a computer and which programs they have used before. The parents, completed a similar questionnaire before we started the blog (See appendix F for Parent information questionnaire) and after the blog participants and parents completed a post-blog questionnaire to gain more background knowledge on the participants and to see how often the parents participated on the blog. I wanted to get their feedback on the blog. Another form of data I used was interviews. I interviewed all the participants to gain more background knowledge on how much they use their computers and how much they know about them. While Biker, Colts and Littlest Petshop worked with me throughout the tutoring session and in the computer lab to work on our blog, I observed them and took field notes, recording what I saw, how they acted when on the computer, what they worked on, how well they stayed on task, etcetera Lastly, I collected student work. I used the blog and what the participants wrote on the blog as student work. I also used writing prompts that the participants wrote during our sessions.

Throughout my research I ensured transferability. Mills states that transferability as referring to “qualitative researcher’s beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that
the goal of their work is not to develop “truth” statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people” (2007). I collected detailed descriptive data to allow for permit comparison of a given context to other possible contexts that can be transferred (Mills). I collected writing prompts from students as they used the blog as well as what they wrote to the prompt on paper. I also used strategies to make my research dependable. Dependability according to Mills “refers to the stability of the data” (2007). I made sure to use two or more methods in such a way that the weakness of one is compensated by the strength of another (Mills) while conducting my research; i.e. triangulation to ensure its dependability. I established an audit trail, that my critical colleague examined reviewing my field notes, student work and the process of collecting data, conducting an analysis and helping to interpret the data.

Lastly, to ensure the quality and creditability of my research, I addressed the “conformability of the data, or the neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected” (Mills, 2007, p. 105). I continued to practice triangulation; I used questionnaires, interviews, and student work and field notes of my observations. I also practiced reflexivity, by reflecting on my field notes, how I felt the study was progressing and my thoughts. I kept looking back to my research question and had more questions to help guide me through my research and reflect on it.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants

Before I conducted my research, I had to ask for informed consent from the parents to protect the rights of the participants. The participants in this study were children and as required by law, I needed parental consent. I also asked for informed consent from the parents to use them as participants as well, using their questionnaires and comments in my research to protect their rights. This was a qualitative study involving small group and one-on-one with Biker, Colts and Littlest Petshop. I gave each participant a consent form and explained the research I would be
conducting. The accent form they signed confirmed permission. The consent form explained the study and asked for permission and a signature. I also gave a consent form to all of the participant’s parents who gave me both verbal and signed permission to use their children for this study. All participants were willing and excited to let me work with them and conduct my research using their work. Both the parents and the participants knew their names would be pseudonyms. The participants chose their own pseudonym. I gave each parent the pseudonym of their child thus guaranteeing confidentiality. The parents were aware that all names would be anonymous, and any artifacts collected would be altered to block out their child’s name or the pseudonym name, would be placed on the artifact.

Data Collection

To collect data I used many different forms of information. I used observation field notes to see if students seemed to be motivated to write on the blog. There was a student questionnaire for students to fill out before we began to blog and one to fill out once we were done with the blogging experience at the end of the four weeks. Parents were given a parent questionnaire at the beginning of the tutoring sessions to gain background knowledge and they were given a post blog questionnaire as well. I used the student questionnaires and parent questionnaires to gain background on the participants and parent input of the blog. I used interview answers as well. I interviewed each student. I used the blog for student work as well as hand-written work.

Data Analysis

Students were observed during this study for four weeks during Spring of 2011. Anecdotal notes were recorded each tutoring session, as well as samples of student work conducted on the blog. Before beginning the blog, students filled out a blogging questionnaire with a few questions asking students if they have ever used or heard of a blog before. Parents of
the participants filled out a questionnaire giving background knowledge on the students and if they have a computer at home. I conducted interviews with them to gain further insight. We later began the blog. After the four weeks of blogging, students were given another questionnaire asking them what they thought of the blog and if they liked it. Parents also received a questionnaire to see what they thought of the blog and if they participated in checking the blog, and viewing their child’s work. With all the data collected, I began analyzing the data. I coded my notes, samples of student work, questionnaires and interviews and found common themes in them. Some of these themes appear more in my observations than on the blog and others appear more in the questionnaires and interviews. As I was collecting the data and analyzing it I kept the research I found in my thoughts.

**Findings and Discussion**

Analyzing the data, I found four common themes that kept appearing. Student motivation reveals the ways the students were motivated and how they felt using the blog. Student familiarity with blogging and computer experience is observed in the students’ ability to use the computer, the keyboard and ability to get onto the internet. It also describes the ranges of familiarity of the blog and how often students use the computer. Length of student writing measures the length of writing students did using the blog compared to actual writing on paper. Finally, parent support and involvement describes the degree of parent support and involvement in the blog if at all.

**Student Motivation**

Student motivation is important because according to Porter (2010), motivation is the force that drives a person to achieve goals they want to accomplish for themselves. Using the blog as a motivator was a key in this study. The students were motivated to continue working on
the blog. All the students seemed to really enjoy picking out their pseudonym names which I told them were their “code names.” This got them ready to blog from the start and after picking their names I told them what we would be doing on the blog. I used the parent questionnaire to gain some background knowledge of my students and to find out what motivates them. One parent said their child was motivated by praise, one-to-one assistance with an adult, and earning rewards. Another parent said that sports related activities and themed stories interested their child and books with pictures in them. Lastly, another parent said their child was motivated by writing stories about animals and illustrating them. Using this information helped me design the activities on the blog, incorporating pictures with animals and sports and provide one to one assistance to those who needed help.

All three participants were very excited to try something new (Field notes, 3/8/11). They also seemed a little nervous because all three of them said they had never blogged before in the questionnaire. Two of the three participants said that what motivates them are fun things that interest them.

All the students were asked: “If given the choice to write a story on the blog or to write a story using pen and paper which would you choose?” All three responded “the blog, because it is fun” (Field notes, 3/8/11).

Biker responded that he would rather write on a blog than use pencil and paper because “it is fun and you don’t need to write the words you push the letters (type up what you want to write).” Littlest Petshop said “I would rather blog than write using pencil and paper because I like using the computer and because it is fun.” Colts would rather blog “because its fun, allowing you to go on the internet and it allows you to go on the computer.”
Biker, Colts and Littlest Petshop wrote their first post on “What Happened?” (See Appendix G for “What Happened?” Story from the blog) Students wrote about what was happening in the picture that was already posted to the blog. The picture was of a dog that was stuck between the seats in the back of a car. At first students had trouble coming up with ideas but once they started they could did not stop writing.

The last post they wrote, they were given a choice of four pictures to choose from. Each student picked a different picture. They wrote a story about what was going on in the picture using pencil and paper and later I typed them up on the blog, in a post students would later edit. Students seemed to be distracted more and tended to not be interested in this activity when they were writing with pencil and paper. Once I typed their stories up on the blog, the next time we were on the blog they were happy to see them. I told them the task of reading their stories and editing them, changing their stories if they wanted to, adding more to their stories and fixing spelling if they found any spelling mistakes.

Biker was excited saying “Okay can you help me get to the page where I can add to my story? I already have an idea of what I want to add to my story.”

The first day we started blogging, the participants seemed very excited. I explained in the beginning of the tutoring session that we would be going to the computer lab to start our blog. We walked downstairs for our break to go to the vending machines and on the way back upstairs to our room we passed the computer lab, one student asked “Is this where we are going to be going to use the computers?” I told them this is where we would be
and that we would be coming down to the computer lab later. All the way up the stairs they were talking about the blog (Field notes, 2/15/11). This shows that the participants were interested in the blog.

Three out of the four times we were working on the blog all three students seemed to be interested. They seemed to be focused and motivated to keep writing. When they did talk they talked about their stories and what they were writing on the blog and about their own use of the computer. The last time we were at the computer lab, Littlest Petshop was a little unfocused and kept making up random words and then deleting them in her story. I asked her if she needed any help and she said she did not need any help. I reminded her a few times of the task. When she was focused, she added one more sentence to her story and then she wanted to write another chapter to her story. This leads me to wonder if she had other things on her mind that day. Was she not motivated to complete the task because of the task itself? Was she not motivated because she had other things on her mind or was she bored with the blog? I asked if she was okay and she said she was. Later she completed the post blog questionnaire and wrote on the questionnaire that she loved blogging.

Observing Littlest Petshop, I noticed she wanted to add another chapter to her story but we were unable to write another chapter because we were running out of time. I told her we would not be coming back to the computer lab to work on the blog because it was the last day for blogging, but she could work on her second chapter when she was home on the blog. Littlest Petshop said “Yea I can I have all the stuff about the blog at home and I’m going to hold onto it and save it forever.” She then asked “Can I
have my own blog?” I told Littlest Petshop “Yes you can have your own blog” (Field notes, 3/22/11).

After students were done writing on the blog they wanted to read each other’s stories. Each participant read all the stories and wrote comments on them. Before they started reading each other’s story, I posted my edited story and read it to them. They could then edit their story more if they wanted to. Later they read the stories and made comments. Having other readers read their stories not only motivated them, but also helped them write more. They wanted to write longer stories for others to read. Like Barlow’s study, I also found that my students seemed more motivated to read and write more when they were able to work on the blog. They were motivated to write more when they were given a choice with which picture they would like to write a story about.

One of the parents noticed their child seemed to be motivated by the blog.

They said “I have noticed that biker seems to be writing more on the blog. He likes it and likes the computer. He seems to be motivated by the blog.”

I was happy to find, I was not the only one seeing the students motivated when using the blog and wanting to write more. Biker’s mom answered the question what did you like about the blog? On the post parent questionnaire saying,

“Biker was proud and excited to show us. Also seems like he has connected with his classmates. He was just excited to show and read us their stories as his own.”

This shows Biker was proud of his work and his classmates work. He was motivated to read the stories and show his family the stories on the blog. It also
shows that he connected with his classmates who he has never met before this tutoring session. One day I asked the students “What would you like to do today?” They responded “Work on the blog.” Unfortunately due to time constraints we were unable to work on the blog that day.

Some of the findings lead to more questions. Are students still motivated to work on a blog if they have previous experience with blogging? Are students motivated by the blog itself, or the activities I had them complete while on the blog? Were students motivated to work on the blog because it was new to them? These questions lead to ask how much experiences students have with the computer, and what their familiarity with blogging is.

**Student Familiarity with Blogging and Computer Experience**

It is important to know how much experience students have with computers when working with programs like blogging. All three students said they had never used a blog before. Using a questionnaire, I found that all the participants had used a computer before but had different levels of experience. Two students could work independently on the computer and showed they had some experience navigating around the computer. One student needed one-to-one assistance and showed lack of experience with the computer. Two out of three students have heard of blogs before but have never blogged before. I noticed throughout the blog as students became more familiar with the blog, they seemed to write more and relax. They were still excited about the blog and became familiar with it; completing tasks more independently.

Colts uses the computer at home every day and has his own computer, going on it whenever he wanted to. He also uses the computer at school, but very seldom. When on the computer, Colts mostly plays games and use the internet. Colts has also heard of a blog before but doesn’t have one or know anyone who has one. This means he has had little experience with
blogging and some experience with the computer. Through observations I found that Colts knew how to use the computer, and knew how to use the keyboard to type up his stories.

Biker uses the computer at his grandparent’s home and at school. He had never heard of a blog but, uses the internet, thus leading me to believe he had no experience working on a blog. Biker uses the computer very seldom, about once a week at school for about twenty minutes, and about once a week at home for about ten minutes. When on the computer, Biker writes stories, and at school he uses the computer for fast math. Through my observations I have found that Biker has trouble using the computer due to lack of experience he has with the computer. When we first started blogging he had no idea what keys were used to make capital letters, where the space bar was or where any of the letter keys were (letter placement). It took him a long time to type up his stories. Since he was struggling, I had him tell me how to spell the words he wanted in his story and showed him where each individual letter was. He was starting to get a little frustrated. Towards the last blog he was beginning to become familiar with the keyboard taking less time to enter his writing. As we progressed with the blog, I noticed Biker needed less one-on-one time with me because he was becoming more independent with the computer.

Littlest Petshop showed she had plenty of experience with the computer. At school, Littlest Petshop uses the computer once or twice a week. At home Littlest Petshop uses the computer everyday for communicating with siblings, friends and other family members through video chat, and using the internet to play games. Sometimes she uses the computer for school work. She had heard of a blog before but had not blogged. After this blog, she may start her own blog or continue to use this blog. Littlest Petshop asked if she could get a blog and I told her she could. This leads me to believe she may try to use a blog in the future. Littlest Petshop worked independently on the blog with little assistance. I would walk around the room and see if any of
the participants needed help, offering assistance to those who needed it. This showed Littlest Petshop had experience using a computer before. She would type up her story at a fast pace, leading me to believe she is familiar with the keyboard.

Computer experience is important to note because this study shows, two out of three students could work independently at a moderate pace and were able to complete the task assigned. If students are not familiar with the computer or blogging they may get frustrated and not be motivated to work. They may need one-to-one assistance and with 25 students in the classroom and only one teacher, this could be a problem. It may also be time consuming until students learn how to use the computer. Teachers have to understand this and allow more time for students to complete their projects and provide support for them. This leads to the question: What age group would benefit starting a blog? This idea needs further research. There are many factors-how much a person knows about computers and blogging.

**Length of Student Writing**

The blog also implied that students were motivated by how much they wrote. To determine if students were motivated and wanted to write more on the blog, I compared their writing on the blog to their writing using pencil and paper. I looked at student work (See Appendix H for student work) and I reviewed the blog (See Appendix I for the blog) to evaluate and determine if my findings supported my theories. Also through observations, I observed student behaviors that implied students wanted to write more. Students wrote a story using a picture of their choice from four different pictures provided. All three students added more to their stories, and students wrote more each time they were given a task to complete on the blog. Colts wrote a piece called “cow” (See appendix J for “Cow” story).

“COW”
On day a cow flo in a baseball feld than he ran a rond the. Base’s 
he wonted to play.

This story has a total of two sentences. For the next tutoring session on the blog, I typed up their story as they had written it. I wanted them to edit it. They were given the choice of adding more to the story if they wanted to, leave the story the way it was, or they could change spelling and edit their work. This student chose to add more to the piece. On the blog, four sentences were added. They story now reads:

“THE COW”
On day a cow flo in a baseball feld than he ran a rond the base’s.
he wonted to play. The he got a bat. And hit a homerun. Then he 
hit a basehit for a tripol play. Then he piched a prfct ening. Then 
he won the game.

The sentences this student added:

The he got a bat. And hit a homerun. Then he hit a basehit. For a 
tripol play. Then he piched a prfct ening. Then he won the game.

This student was motivated to write more using the blog indicated by the addition of four more sentences to their original story.

Another student wrote a story “The Man That Wat Fining” (Appendix K),

“The Man That Wat Fining.”

The mans name is gegedesac. Gegedesac is fishing bat he ca a 
shark. Gedesa never fithed agin.

I explained and showed them how they would edit their work on the blog. He read his story and said “Okay can you help me get to the page where I can add more? I already know what I want
to add to my story.” I helped get him to the edit page so he could add more to his story. Once he was done with the story on the blog, he wrote four more sentences. The story on the blog reads:

“The Man That Wat Fining”

the man is gegedesac. Gegedesac is fishing bat he ca a shark.

Gegadea never fithed agin. Until he trid one time he tried again.

The man caout a littl fish. Then a jinormus sharck cam up. He caout a sharck and aet it.

The sentences he added were:

Until he trid one time he tried again. The man caout a little fish. Then a jinormous sharck came up. He caout a sharck and aet it.

One student was so motivated to write, the student wanted to write a second chapter to the story. Unfortunately due to time limitations we were unable start the second chapter of their story. The student wanted to work on it next time but I had to explain that there would not be a next time. I told the students they could go on the blog at home to write more if they wanted, but we would not be working on the blog anymore. One student said: “That’s okay, I have all that stuff at home (meaning all the information how to access the blog) and I will keep that forever.” She then asked: “Can I have a blog?” This also indicates that the students were motivated and wanted to write more. They enjoyed writing.

When we first started blogging, the students were hesitant and wrote less on the blog. As they became familiar with the blog and the blogging process, they wanted to write more. They also wanted to read each other’s work; leaving comments such as “Grate job” and “I like your story.” I also posted comments on the blog to the students,
encouraging them to keep up the great work. They responded well to the comments and more wrote more each week. All three students were proud of their work. They told their parents about their work and their parents checked out what they wrote on the blog.

One parent said “I have noticed that Biker seems to be writing more on the blog. He really likes it and likes the computer.”

This comment also shows parent support and involvement in the blog. I also noticed that Biker and the other participants were writing more on the blog.

**Parent Support and Involvement**

Parental support and involvement in the blog was also a key part of this research. With questionnaires, informal interviews and observations, I was able to observe the way parents reacted to their students when the students talked about the blog. After our first blog post I informed the parents that we made our first post. Before I could talk to the parents, the participants ran to their parents saying: “We posted on the blog today.” The parents’ responded saying: “We will have to check it out when we get home.” This not only shows parental support, but also demonstrates that the students were proud of their work and wanted to share their work with their parents and other family members. Over the course of four weeks, parent involvement decreased. Each time, parents said they would say they would check out the blog, however a few parents admitted during the course of this study that they did not have time to check out the blog. By the last blogging session of the study, only two out of three parents were able to check out the blog.

One parent said: “We have not checked out the blog yet, we have not had time. Right now our internet is down. I hope my husband can fix it so we can check out the blog.”
Later, when I received their post blogging questionnaire, they were able to fix their internet and visit the blog once.

Another parent said: “Yes, we have checked out the blog. We have not had time to make comments on the blog yet.”

This parent had hoped to comment on the blog to their child, and to the other participants in the study, but ended up not having enough time. Biker wrote a comment after he went home on the story I wrote it said: “I like your story so much I showed it with my mom.” Biker also wrote another comment on Littlest Petshop’s post: “I love your story!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” and on Colt’s story Biker wrote: “My sister liked your story.”

Biker’s mom saw their work and stated that she liked the blog.

Biker’s mom made the comment “I like the blog. I have noticed Biker wants to write more and enjoys writing on the blog. He really likes using the computer.”

The parents seem to like the blog and the idea of having a blog. One parent on the post blogging questionnaire wrote

“Honestly was a little hesitant at first. Think sometimes kids are too “plugged in.” Didn’t like the idea of a blog. However, it ended up being a good experience.”

This parent really did not like the idea of blogging but was open to having their child try the blog and experience new things. After seeing how their child reacted to the blog, this parent’s mind was changed, saying it was a good experience.

Colt’s father was excited about the blog. He talked about getting a new computer and giving Colt’s his old laptop computer. He was very enthusiastic about testing out the new
computer and looking at the blog. When I spoke with the parents about the blog, they always seemed excited and interested in what I had to say. I provided the parents with an information sheet that explained the blog. This information included: Web address to the blog, the user name, password, and directions about how to access the blog. It also contained their child’s pseudonym. On the blog, I had a few different pages. One page provided resources that parents could look at with lists of websites that I had used in the past. Another was an ‘all about me’ page that described who I was and the purpose of the blog. The last page was a list of writing topics the participants created. This provided parents enough information to feel comfortable getting involved with the blog. They could make comments support their child by helping them get on the blog if the students wanted to add more to their stories or create new posts. Even with this information provided to the parents, none of them made comments on the blog. The closest comment that showed parental support was from Biker, “I like your story so much I showed it with my mom.” At the end of this study, parents filled out a blogging questionnaire to find out what they thought about the blog. They seemed to all like it. One parent visited the blog only once because they did not have enough time. Another parent visited the blog three times because their child was proud of their work and wanted to show family members what they did on the computer.

In the post-blog questionnaire, I asked parents if they visited the resource page and what they thought on it. One parent did not visit the resource page, while another checked out the resource page and said:

“Did see the resource page. The format is a little messed up. Some nice resources. One resource we used not listed is (internet4classrooms.com) has tons of computer based games and activities by grade level and skill.”
I appreciated that this parent was honest about the resource page, giving me another website to check out and adding it to the resource page. I agree with her that the resource page has format issues. I am pleased to find that they looked at the resource page and investigated some of the resources.

With parental support and involvement, students are motivated and proud of their work. They want to keep writing on the blog to show their parents. Parents, looking at the blog over time, noticed their child’s progress and any improvements they are making. Having a blog also provides parents an opportunity to see their child’s work in a paperless format, saving trees and paper. One parent wrote in the post blog questionnaire: “Looks like a good way to encourage kids to write with all the funny pictures,” clearly showing that they checked out the blog. Students were motivated to work at a level they were comfortable with and students or parents had the ability to email the web address to other family members, to show them the blog. Parents enjoyed watching their children talk about what they did in school and this gave parents an opportunity to see their child’s work.

**Limitations**

Some limitations were discovered while conducting this study. One limitation was the amount of time I had with the participants. I only saw them once a week for an hour and 30 minutes. In that one hour and 30 minutes, I had to work with the participants on writing, guided reading, and word study. The blogging took up about half, if not more time, leaving little time for other areas that I needed to work with students on. The time allowed for completion of this study was also very brief, lasting only four weeks. As a result, I was only able to work with the participants on the blog a total of four times, providing very little time to conduct in-depth research.
Another limitation was the number of participants. I was working with only three students as my findings reflect. I would expect that my findings would have different results, if given the chance to work with a whole class, and for a longer period of time. With the small group, I saw students were motivated by the blog, however when I am in the classroom I will have more than three students to teach. Would all my students be interested and motivated if I provided a class blog that they could use and work on? There needs to be further research with an entire class participating on a class blog, to determine if students are motivated to read and write more using a blog.

Computer experiences bring us to another limitation. The students I worked with had never used a blog before, thus making this a new experience for them. It took them a while to become proficient working on the blog. Some of the participants had their own computer, using it whenever they wanted, leading them to become more independent on the computer. Those with previous computer experience could type at a moderate pace and seemed to become familiar with the blogging process faster than those who had little experience with the computer. One participant used the computer very seldom at home and at school. This made it more difficult for him to become familiar with the keyboard and the blogging process. He typed at a slow pace, looking for each letter on the keyboard. At first he seemed frustrated when trying to use the computer, but as time passed, he needed less one-on-one time with me; he became more familiar with both the keyboard and the blog, and he enjoyed it more.

Lastly, our blog was set to all the private settings allowed. This was done to protect my students’ privacy. We had one account and I had to sign each student onto the computer, log them on the blog and model for them what I wanted them to use the blog for. This did not allow students to own their work. They could not create their own blog or have their own space. Next
time I would have each student create their own blog account, and have them sign up for the class blog. This would allow students to be creative by adding links and other information to their blogs and the class blog; giving them ownership of their work.

**Implications**

Before using Web 2.0 Technology (such as blogging) to help motivate students, teachers should understand the implications. The students of this generation are surrounded by technology long before they enter school; therefore, using Web 2.0 technology in the classroom benefits students because it makes use of skills and experiences they are familiar with already. According to my findings, all three participants used a computer before; and two out of three participants have their own computers at home. Jacobs (2011) explains the “Millenial” generation (which followed Generation X) is said to be born between 1977 and 1997 (p. 15). “Scholars and journalists who write about the Millenials characterize them as being the first generation to have grown up in a fully digital world” (p. 15). These so-called “Millenials” use technology at home, so it makes sense to incorporate it in the schools as well.

Another implication I found in the research is the additional time and attention that teachers need to invest in order to make the most use of Web 2.0 Technology. Teachers will need to ensure that WebPages, blogs, Wikis, etcetera are authentic and appropriate; and do not contain plagiarized information, or rude comments (Harris & Rea, 2009; Albion, 2008). Teachers should check the websites they plan to use before having students use them for virtual field trips and other creations to make sure the sites are safe, secure and appropriate for their students.

Teachers should review the WebPages, blogs and Wikis regularly to ensure students are staying on task, completing assignments, understanding the material given to them, and joining in the discussions. The content students write on the blog can be used as a form of informal
assessment. If the teacher notices someone struggling, they can conference with them and provide extra support. For instance, in my study, I noticed that Biker was having a difficult time typing up his work. I worked one-on-one with him, helping him become more confident with his typing skills. As time went on I noticed that Biker needed less one-on-one assistance and seemed to enjoy working on the blog. Throughout my study, I checked the blog every couple of days to determine if any of my students made comments. Towards the last day of the research, one of my students wrote a few comments on the blog. I noticed the format was different when he posted, and this lead me to believe his mother helped him type the comments. This is another example demonstrating the investment of time needed when using Web 2.0 Technology in the classroom.

To encourage parent participation and to support other educational professionals involved, I created a research page that included a list of websites for parents and teachers to use. I made sure all of the websites were still available and the links still worked. In the post questionnaire sent home to parents, one parent indicated that the resource page had formatting issues and they gave me another website that they found was helpful. Before posting it on the blog, I evaluated the website, found it useful and added it to the resource page. Teachers need to be able to explain the websites they use, give an overview of what they are looking for, and, answer any questions their students may have. The lists of resources I have on the blog give the website and a brief description about the website. In the future I hope to find more resources that parents and teachers can use and add them to the blog. All of these activities required an investment of time and attention.

Another implication I found in my research and findings is that blogging will not solve every problem. It may help motivate students to write and read more, but other factors also play a part in student learning. Some students may get bored with the blog after awhile or they may
get easily distracted; observed by their typing random words on the blog or looking on the internet for pictures. The question is: Are they bored with the task given to them, or are they bored because the novelty of blogging has waned? Further research needs to be conducted in a larger setting with more participants; focusing in more detail on the many factors that affect student motivation.

One idea is that students may get less distracted by changing the format of the blog periodically. By keeping the blogging experience new and interesting, students may become more motivated to visit and post to the blog and class discussions. There are a number of reasons why students get distracted and feel unmotivated to work on school work. Keeping their interests in mind when creating a blog may help eliminate some of the distractions. Teachers should not rely solely on a blog as a way to teach students and motivate students to read and write more. Teachers should use a variety of texts, other support materials and technologies to help keep students interested in learning. While conducting this, I also found that the level of student experience plays apart in their learning process and can affect how motivated they will be when using the technology.

Teachers need not let the students’ age influence their decisions when deciding on the type or types of technology they use in the classroom as tools (Putnam, M. S. & Kingsley, T., 2009). I was surprised to find how much experience two of the participants had with computers. I noticed the student who did not have as much experience with computers, at first seemed frustrated and not motivated at all by the blog. I worked one-on-one with that student, which helped as he became more experienced with the computer. He grew to love blogging and became motivated to write and read more. “Such changes are in some ways quite heartening, today’s online technologies have young people reading and writing more than they were 20 years or even
a decade ago” (Williams, 2008, p 682). Teachers gain insight if they first ascertain how much experience students have with the computer and the programs they may use. A simple questionnaire and a quick informal discussion will help determine the level of student experience. In the future I will check to see how much experience students have with the computer and other forms of technology they are familiar with before deciding blogging is the right choice for my students to use. Experience, more than the age of the students seems to be a bigger factor in student motivation, however, more research needs to be conducted to determine the best age range to introduce Web 2.0 Technology, such as blogging to students.

Another implication that my study and research demonstrates is whether students are motivated to learn because of the technology being fun, new and exciting, or because they are learning and want to go on the computer to read and write more. What motivates students to want to use a computer rather than using pencils and paper to write? In my study, Littlest Petshop seemed unmotivated after a while. She was getting easily distracted and needed to be reminded to stay on task. Was this because she was not motivated by the blog anymore? Was she no longer motivated by the task I gave her complete? “Although motivation is not a prerequisite to achieving success, success can bring about motivation, which in turn can lead to further achievement” (Atkinson, 2008, p.185). Further research needs to be conducted ascertain what about the blog and other forms of technology motivate students? Students who are successful at completing tasks seem more motivated to keep completing other tasks. In my study I found that parental involvement was implicated as playing a key role in motivating the participants.

Parental involvement plays a major role in student learning. When younger students are able to show their work to an audience, they demonstrate more motivation than those who do not have an audience (Kemker, Barron, & Harmes, 2007). In my study the audience of the blog
consisted of only the parents, the students and myself because I limited the blog by keeping the settings private. Teachers should attempt to encourage parent involvement in school activities. If parents are unable to come into the classroom, teachers might provide them with the web address to a Wiki or blog, showcasing student work. This offers parents a way to get involved, and students to feel proud of their work.

Lastly, teachers need to be aware of positive and negative aspects associated with using technology in the classroom. Some examples of negative aspects are having limited access and availability to technology a teacher may want to use in the classroom. For instances, are there enough computers available? Is the internet connection working? Are the websites and resources available? Before I started the blog I went to the computer lab to make sure the blog worked and that the internet connection at the college was working. Another aspect is student work not being compatible with another computer or software program. A participation gap is another negative aspect to consider. Students may not have computers available outside of school to continue their writing or listen to podcasts (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2006; Jacobs 2011).

Teachers should be prepared with the details and research to defend their decision to incorporate Web 2.0 Technology in the classroom, case a colleague, administrator or parent challenges them. They should prepare reasons why they are using this technology along with research that provides evidence of the benefits this technology offers. Before starting the blog, I was speaking with the parents; some were hesitant about letting their children blog, but others expressed enthusiasm, excited to try something new; hoping it would motivate their children to want to read and write more. Once I explained the research, the parents seemed more willing to let their children participate in the blog. This idea lead me to wonder what experiences parents
might already have with computers (as technology continues to evolve); and how this might impact the student. If the parents are not comfortable with technology and are unmotivated to learn about it could the children be affected by their parents’ example and likewise, be unmotivated to use technology?

**Conclusion**

“The use of technology in the classroom has many benefits for students such as finding current and easy to access information through Internet resources, being motivated and empowered by technology tools, assisting and enhancing the learning process with the use of specific software and web sites, and opening a global perspective by talking with others around the world through email” (Rosefeld, 2008, p.157).

There are many ways for teachers to use Web 2.0 technology in the classroom. “With access to resources such as the internet, students can investigate multiple perspectives to enhance their depth of knowledge related to specific topics” (Kemker, Barron & Harmes, 2007, P. 308). Teachers must learn how to use such technology and implement it in their classrooms in an authentic way.

“Anyone with access to a fairly standard computer and Internet connection, and who has fairly elementary knowledge of basic software applications and functions, can create a diverse range of meaningful artifacts using a strictly finite set of physical operations or techniques (keying, clicking, cropping, dragging) in a tiny
space, with just one or two (albeit complex) tools” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p.225-226).

Using technology in the classroom motivates students and helps build many skills. “Although motivation is not a prerequisite to achieving success, success can bring about motivation, which in turn, can lead to further achievement” (Atkinson, 1998, p.185). My research supports the ideas that success can foster motivation in students, and that can lead to increased achievement.

Reexamining my research question: How can teachers and educators use Web 2.0 technology in classrooms to help motivate students to read and write more?, we find through research and this study that there are many different types of technology that teachers can use in the classroom to increase motivation in students. One type of technology: blogging, has been studied extensively. Through my research of published studies and having conducted my own study, I have found that blogging does indeed motivate students to read and write more. All three participants in my study stated they would rather write on a blog than write using a pencil and paper. They wanted to read each other’s stories. Biker was proud of his work, showing his mother the blog and he was also excited about his peers’ work; reading their stories as if they were his own. Having students read and publish their stories, post comments on others’ stories on the blog not only helped motivate students to write more, it also promoted higher order thinking skills and demonstrated improvement in their writing skills.

This study also indicates that having an audience, in this case the parents, the other students and myself, helped motivate students to write more. Evaluating the blog it is evident that Biker, Colts, and Littlest Petshop wrote more on the last blog post than they did on the first
post. I noticed throughout the blog, as students became more familiar it, they seemed to relax and write more. They began to feel comfortable and established a routine.

    Teachers should begin preparing students early on using technology in the classroom, and as they gain experience and as the technology progresses it will be easier for them to adapt to new technologies. “Such changes are in some ways quite heartening, today’s online technologies have young people reading and writing far more than they were 20 years or even a decade ago” (Williams, 2008. p.682) With all this new technology available, it makes sense to use it in our classrooms to motivate student learning. Technology should be incorporated as much as possible, alongside the more traditional tools such as textbooks, books and other materials. As more research is conducted, teachers will be able to justify the integration of Web 2.0 Technology in every aspect of their classroom and curriculum. What is most evident, is that technology is ever evolving and will continue to have a major impact in our classroom and society.
References


Appendix A Blog Questionnaire

**Blogging Questionnaire**

How often do you use the computer at home?    Everyday   Once or twice a week   once a month   very seldom

How often do you use the computer at school?  Everyday   Once or twice a week   once a month   very seldom

Do you use the internet?

Have you heard of a blog before?

What do you do on the computer?
Appendix B Blogging Interview

Blogging Interview

Name: ___________________________  Interviewer: ___________________________ Date:_________________________

1. Do you like using the computer? Why?

2. What do you do on the computer?

3. When do you use the computer?

4. When do you go on the internet?

5. Do you have a blog? Have you heard of a blog?

6. What motivates/ makes you want to keep working at something you?

7. What motivates you to go on the computer?

8. Would you be interested in participating in a blog and use it throughout the semester?

9. If you had a choice between writing a paper on the computer or by hand which would you choose and why?
Appendix C Field Notes Form

Date:_____________________            Researcher:______________________________

# of participants:__________       Name of Participants:______________________________

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Appendix D Post Blog Questionnaire for Students

Post Blogging Questionnaire (Students)

Code name: ________________________________

1. Did you like using the classroom blog? Yes  No
2. Would you use a blog again if given the choice? Yes  No
3. Did you like being able to pick out your own code name? Yes  No

4. What did you do on the blog?

5. Why did you like or not like working on the blog?

6. Would you do anything differently if you do another blog for class? Yes  No
   If yes what would it be?

7. Any suggestions for me that I can use when I get a classroom of my own?

8. Any other questions or comments
Appendix E Post Blog Questionnaire for Parents

Post Blogging Questionnaire

1. Did you visit the class blog? How many times?

2. What did you like about the blog?

3. Did you visit the resource page and other pages of the blog? If yes, were they useful?

4. What you disliked about the blog?

5. Anything I could change for the future?

6. Any further questions and/or comments
Appendix F Parent Questionnaire

Parent Questionnaire

Child's Name: ________________________________________________

Parents Name: _________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Sibling Names and age:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________________

Phone number: ______________________________________________________

Best time to reach you: ______________________________________________

Best way to reach you: _______________________________________________

What are your child's strengths in literacy? What do you feel are your child's weaknesses in Literacy?

Does your child have any special interests? What are they?

What concerns do you have that I may be able to help with?
What areas is your child having problem with?

Do you have a computer at home? Does your child use the computer for school work?

What motivates your child to read and write?

Do you read to your child?

Do you write with your child?

How does your child spend leisure time?

What does your child do very well?

Any other comments, questions, concerns or things I should know?
Appendix G “What Happened?” Story

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2011

What happened?
Create a story about the picture below. What happened?

[Image of a dog lying on a car seat]

5 comments:

Jennifer's Blog said...
Bookworm:
Stacie was driving down the road to visit her best friend Sam. She decided to bring her dog Dakota with her. Sam had a dog named Fluffy that Dakota loved to play with. As Stacie was driving down the street, a moose ran out in front of her. She stepped on the brakes, stopping suddenly. When she looked back to see how Dakota was doing, she found Dakota was stuck in between the car seat and had a very scared look on her face. Stacie quickly pulled the car over. She then went into the back seat and helped Dakota get unstuck. Dakota was so happy, she gave Stacie kisses. Stacie continued her trip to her friend's house. Dakota was happy to be able to play with her friend Fluffy.

February 14, 2011 1:22 PM

Jennifer's Blog said...
Bookworm:
Stacie was driving down the road to visit her best friend Sam. She decided to bring her dog Dakota with her. Sam had a dog named Fluffy that Dakota loved to play with. As Stacie was driving down the street, a moose ran out in front of her. She stepped on the brakes, stopping suddenly. When she looked back to see how Dakota was doing, she found Dakota was stuck in between the car seat and had a very scared look on her face. Stacie quickly pulled the car over. She then went into the back seat and helped Dakota get unstuck. Dakota was so happy, she gave Stacie kisses. Stacie continued her trip to her friend's house. Dakota was happy to be able to play with her friend Fluffy.

February 14, 2011 1:22 PM

Jennifer's Blog said...
Colts:
My name is colts I get in a crach. In my friens houes. Things did not toern out like I pland.

February 15, 2011 6:25 PM

Jennifer's Blog said...
Biker:
Hi. My name is pizza. I jumped off the back set and ladid finy. I climed back up. Its a good story.
February 15, 2011 6:26 PM

Jennifer's Blog said...
Littlest pet shop:
Malachi was siting on a seat then Malachi slipt uder the seat. Malachi's mommy. Help him get up then malachi broke. His liaeg malachi was happy beuse he was facking abote the bockin liaeg THE EAND

February 15, 2011 6:27 PM

Jennifer's Blog said...
Bookworm:
Great job guys and gals. I really liked your stories keep up the great work. :)

February 15, 2011 6:28 PM
Appendix H Student Work

What happened?

Name is
Littlest Peter

The dog was in the car and was living and the car stop the dog was laying do and sit then the dog was stuck between the z gran selest the E and
Biker’s picture story

The man's name is GedgeSac.
GedgeSac is fishing but he got a shark. GedgeSac never fitted again.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: <strong>The man that we didn't</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is going on in the picture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are the characters?</td>
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<td>Story ideas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Colt’s picture story

On day a cow flo in a baseball field than he ran a round the, Base’s he wanted to play,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Cow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting:</td>
<td>baseball field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are the characters?</td>
<td>Cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is going on in the picture?</td>
<td>The cow is flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story ideas</td>
<td>He will fly in to the baseball field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Littlest Petshop’s picture story

The cat in the mall with her friend Penny
Mom mom I got an a letter from Parrotty I will read it. What is it you got an letter. This is what is said.
Dear Lilly,

I love your but the big bad dog is going to get you. See Black.

Ding Donging Partty

Dear Partty I love you to but you can come today. See you.

Vegan love Lilly.
It is bedtime.

Wow.

Okay.

The next book is The Mall and the Bad Dogs.
Title: The Cat Love Thing

Setting: The cat mall!

Who are the characters?
The Big Dog
Lilly Litty
The fishplaces
Weedy Penney & Kendy

What is going on in the picture?
Lilly Litty is in the Cat mall!

Story ideas
I didn't know
Miss Jennifer's blog

TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2011

Is There a Story Here?
A picture can tell a thousand words. So check out our stories that we created around a funny picture.

Bookworm:

“Open Wide”

One day in Africa, Fluffy the lion woke up to an awful pain in his mouth. He did nothing for a few days thinking the pain would go away. One night the pain got so bad he knew he had to call the dentist. It kept him up all morning. That afternoon Fluffy was so tired. The Dentist was on his way. Dr. Brush came over to Fluffy got on his ladder and told Fluffy, “open wide.” Fluffy did as the dentist told him to do. Dr. Brush got right to work finding out that Fluffy ate too many sweets and had a cavity. Fluffy was starting to fall asleep. He did not want to hurt Dr. Brush so he tried really hard to stay awake. Just as the dentist was about finish Fluffy could not stay awake any longer. Dr. Brush felt Fluffy’s mouth begin to move, and quickly jumped out of his mouth. Good thing the Dr. had good reflexes, he escaped just in time. Fluffy was startled and opened his mouth. Dr. Brush quickly went to Fluffy and told him his tooth was fixed. Fluffy told Dr. Brush Thank you and sorry for closing his mouth. He did not mean too. Dr. Brush
understood and went back to his office. Fluffy was so happy his tooth was fixed.

What's happening in the picture?
A picture can tell a thousand words. So check out the story Biker created around a funny picture.
Biker:

“The Man That Wat Finig"

the mans name is gegedesac. Gegedesac is fishing bat he ca a shark. Gegedesa never fithed agin. Until he trid one time he tried agin. The man caout a littl fish. Then a jinormus sharck came up. he caout a sharck and aet it.

What is going on in the picture?
A picture can tell a thousand words. So check out the story that Colts created around a funny picture.

Colts:

“Cow”
THE COW

On day a cow flo in a baseball feld than he ran a rond the base’s. he wonted to play. Then he got a bat. And hit a homerun. Then he hit a basehit for a tripol play. Then he piched aprfct ening. Then he won the game.

What's the story?
A picture can tell a thousand words. So check out the story that Littlest Petshop created around a funny picture.

Littlest Petshop:

“The cat in The Mall a her Friend Penny”
“Mom Mom” I got an a letter From Parootty I will read ti. What is it you got an leter This is what is Said. Dear Lilly Litlly I Love you but the Big Bad Dog is going to get you sed black Ding Dong Partty Dear Party I love you to but you can come today. Se you ugan love Lilly Littlly it is bed time now okay. The next day "Lilly! it is time to go the MALL!" said lilly's mom. chapter 2

Writing Topics

Below is a list of writing topics created by the participants of this blog. Anyone can use these topics just get some paper, pencils, pick a topic and start writing.

**Writing Topics**

- Seasons
- Weather
- Animals
- Sports
- Running
- Religion
- School
- Math
Listen to the story Curious George Plays Baseball by Margret and H.A. Reys. As you are listening, make some notes about the story. Think about the beginning, middle, and ending of the story when you make your notes. Answer the questions below in the
comments section of this blog.

**Reader's Response Questions**

1. What is happening in the **beginning** of the story?
   In the beginning of the story....

2. What happened in the **middle** of the story?
   In the middle of the story.....

3. What happened at the **end** of the story?
   At the end of the story....

4. Make a text connection. (text-to-text, text-world, text-self)
   A connection I made was.....

---

**What happened?**

Create a story about the picture below. What happened?
Appendix J Colt’s blog post “Cow”

What is going on in the picture?

A picture can tell a thousand words. Check out the story that Colts created around a funny picture.

Colts:

“Cow”

THE COW

On day a cow flo in a baseball feld than he ran a rond the base’s. he wonted to play. Then he got a bat. And hit a homerun. Then he hit a basehit for a tripol play. Then he piched aprfct ening. Then he won the game.
Appendix K Biker’s “The Man That Wat Finig” blog post

What's happening in the picture?
A picture can tell a thousand words. Check out the story Biker created around a funny picture.

Biker:
“The Man That Wat Finig"

![Image of a man fishing with a large shark below the surface]

The man's name is Gegedesac. Gegedesac is fishing but he caught a shark. Gegedesac never fished again. Until he tried one time he tried again. The man caught a little fish. Then a huge shark came up. He caught a shark and ate it.