

## Step 6: Help parents and students connect

by Sue  
Waters

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Welcome to the sixth step in our free professional learning series on **class and student blogging!**

### **The aim of this step is to:**

1. Explain why it is important to help parents and students connect with your class blog.
2. Show common problems parents and students have locating class blogs on the Internet.
3. Provide 10 simple ways you can help parents and students find and use your class blog.

### **Why it is important to help parents and students connect**

Class blogs are an excellent way for parents to find out what is happening in class and what their child is learning. While students love seeing their work on the Internet and adore getting comments from people. It motivates them to write as it gives them an audience that is real. The blog opens up a whole new world of people who can offer encouragement and feedback.

But there's nothing more frustrating trying to find your teacher's website and not being able to find it — make it too hard and they'll quickly give up.

If you want to get the most out of your class blog you need to help parent and students connect with, understand how to use your blog and easily find your class blog.

### **Finding your blog on the Internet**

It's quite common for educators new to blogging to assume their class blog is easily found using Google or that students will write the blog URL correctly in their notebook. These are bad approaches and decrease the chances they will be able to find your class blog.

**Here's how frustrating it can be searching for a teacher's website using Google:**



mrs waters blog

**Web** Images Maps Shopping More ▾ Search tools

About 5,170,000 results (0.18 seconds)

[The Joy of Learning](#)

[learningwithroom23.blogspot.com/](#) ▾

3 days ago - Mrs. Waters brought a big bag of rocks home from the shores of .... Here's our first **blog** post (and group photo) of the 2013-2014 school year!



[Mrs. Waters' Site](#)

[mrswaterssite.blogspot.com/](#) ▾

4 days ago - Collect Sitcom HW; Finish notes; Lamb to the Slaughter story and questions with partner; Test next class. Posted by Mrs. Waters at 7:19 AM No ...

[Year 5 Mrs Waters](#)

[teams.as.edu.au/groups/year5a/blog/](#) ▾

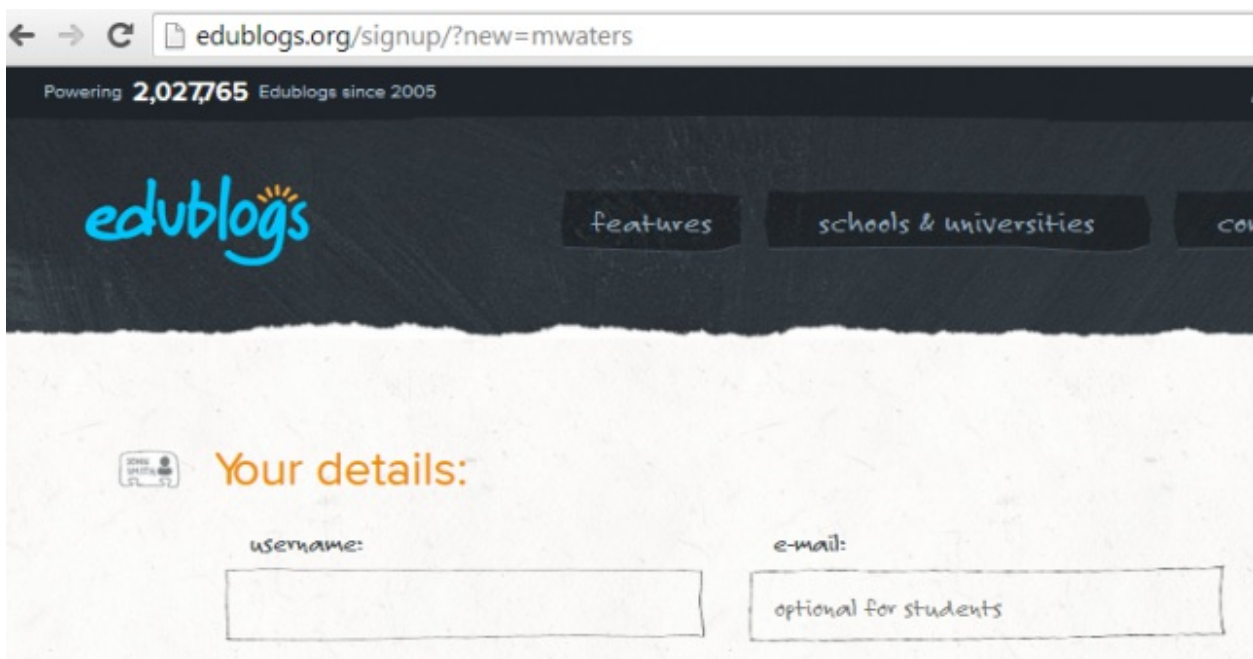
Filter by Tag. No tags found. My Page; Log In; Help. **blog** groupshelp. Edit this **blog** entry. Create a new **blog** entry. Delete this **blog** entry.

**Here is how annoying it is if the student (or you) writes down the wrong blog URL.**

In the examples below the correct URL is [mrswaters.edublogs.org](#). Each example is a common mistake we see in blog URLs sent to Edublogs support.

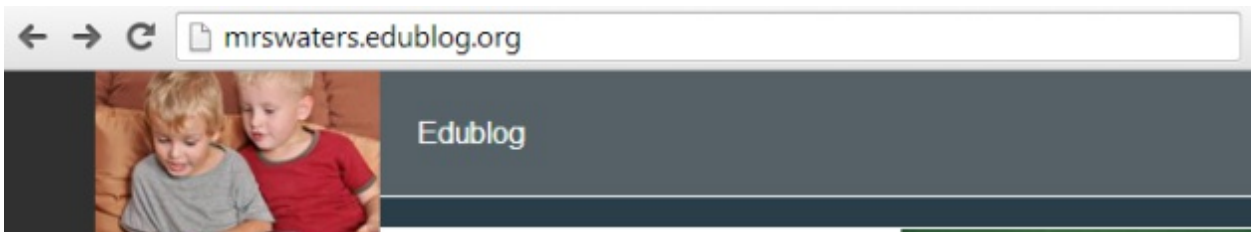
**First part of the blog URL incorrect**

If the first part of your blog URL is typed wrongly they will be redirected to the Edublogs sign up page where some parents and students have been known to try to solve the problem by signing up for a new blog.



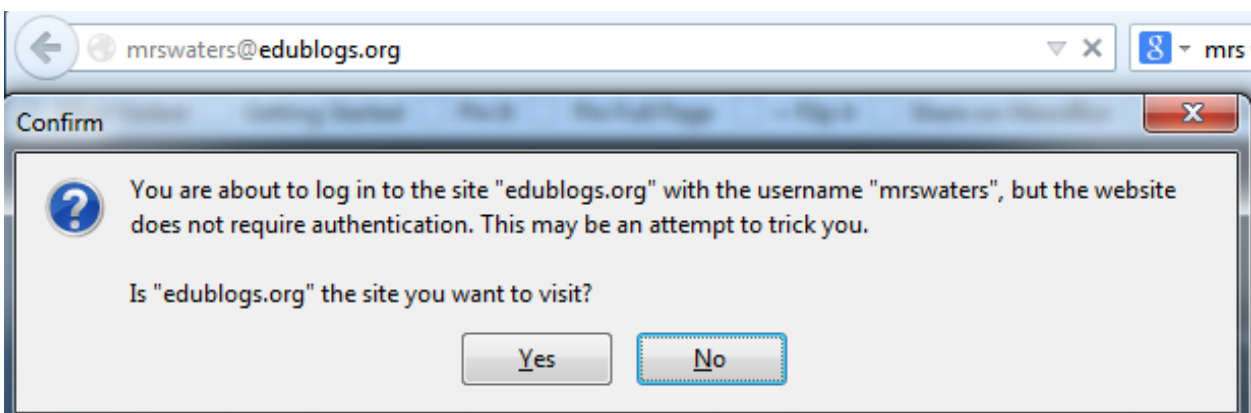
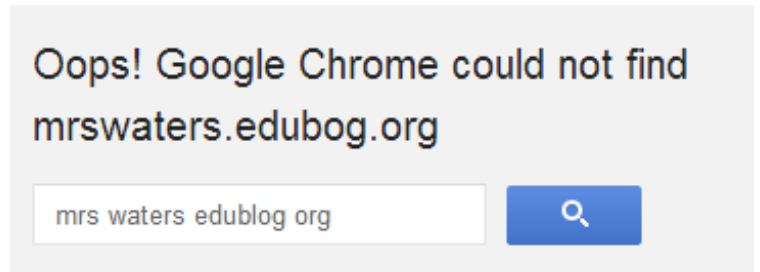
**Edublogs.org spelled wrong**

Missed the s in edublogs



Forgot the l in edubogs

Or writes it as an email address:



## What you need to do

Most experienced educators use several different methods to help parents and students:

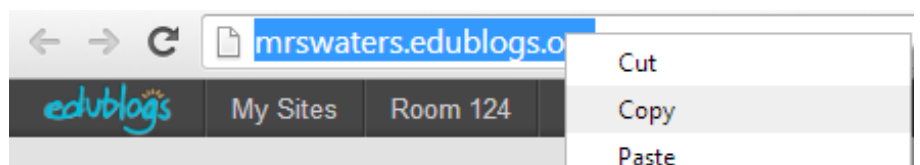
1. Understand what is a blog and how they can participate.
2. Easily find the class blog on the Internet.

## Some ideas you can use!

The most important tip is make sure you go to your class blog URL and then copy/paste your blog URL from the address bar of your web browser into any information you share with students and parents!

It's really easy to type your blog URL wrongly – copying/pasting your blog URL ensures you get the URL correct every time!

### #1. Business card magnet with your class blog URL





Example of a business card

#2. Include the link to your class blog in the school newsletter or send home your own blogging newsletter

Here's an example of a [blogging newsletter](#) by 34MK 2012.



Example of blogging newsletter

#3. Post link to your class blog on your teacher or school website

#4. Include your name in the blog URL

Here's examples of class blogs that use this approach:

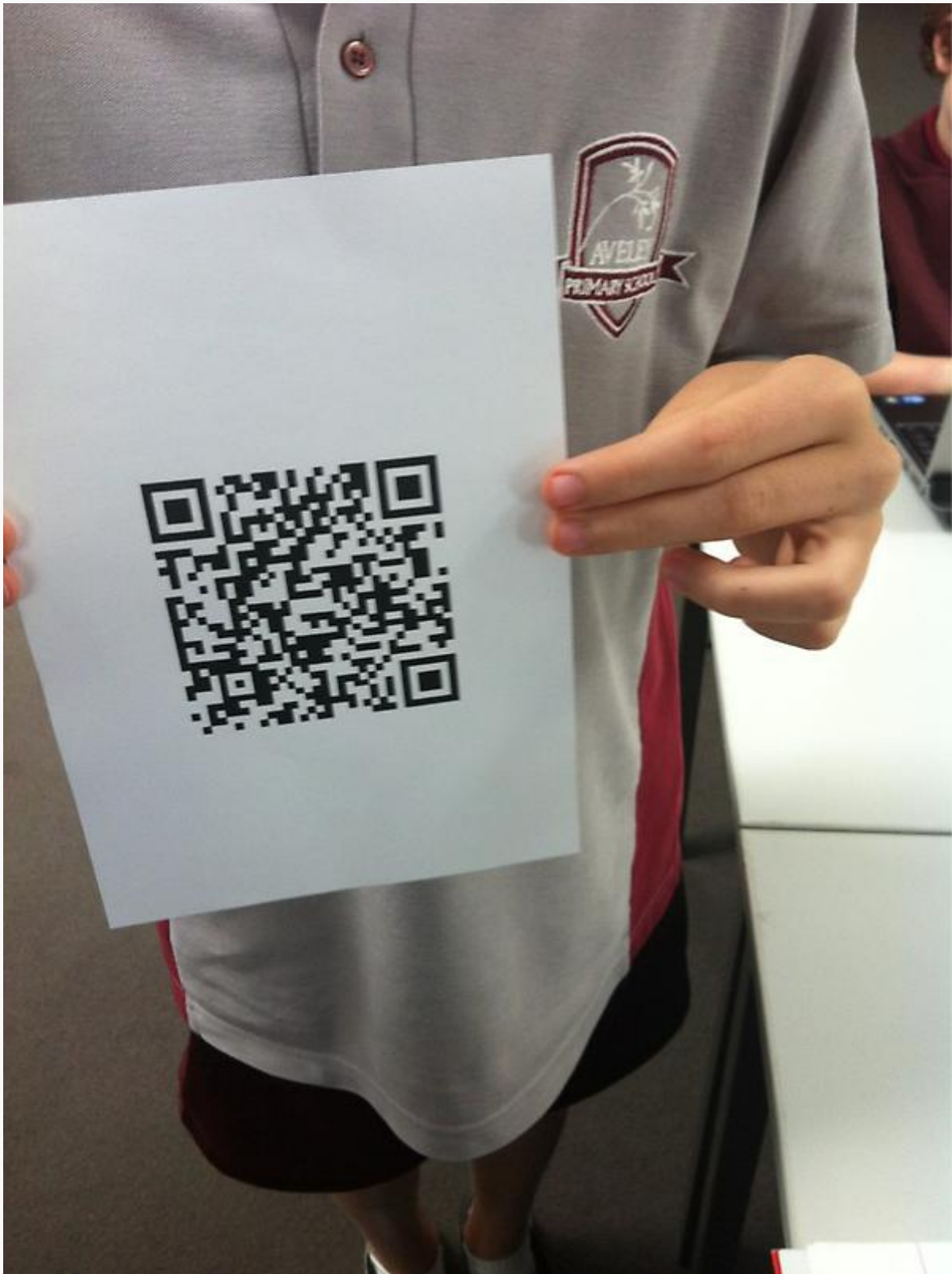
- [Ms Cassidy's Classroom blog](http://mscassidysclass.edublogs.org/) - <http://mscassidysclass.edublogs.org/>
- [Mrs. Schmidt's Classroom Blog](http://mrstinaschmidt.edublogs.org/) - <http://mrstinaschmidt.edublogs.org/>
- [Mr Salsich's Class](http://jmsalsich.edublogs.org/) - <http://jmsalsich.edublogs.org/>
- [Mr Baldock's Class blog](http://mrbaldock.edublogs.org/) - <http://mrbaldock.edublogs.org/>
- [Mrs. Hamman's Class Blog](http://blogs.goaj.org/mrshamman/) - <http://blogs.goaj.org/mrshamman/>
- [Mr. Miller's Classroom Blog](http://mrmillersblog.com/) - <http://mrmillersblog.com/>

#### #5. Add a link to your class blog in your email signature



#### #6. Create a QR Codes for your class blog URL

- QR codes are great for creating a buzz
- You create the QR code for your blog at [QR Stuff](#)
- Then just send the QR Code home with instructions on how to use OR give students the QR code as a task for them to research what it is.
- [Learn more about QR Codes and their educational potential here.](#)



Example of a QR code

### #7. Create detailed Parent handouts

Here's an example of [Eagles Writes handouts](#) designed to help parents know: what is a blog, the blog URL and why they blog.

# EAGLES BLOG

Have you noticed the world has changed?  
Or the changes in reading and writing?

- ★ **We are Wandering Wordsmiths; Emerging Experts**
- ★ **What else could we write? How else could we say it better?**
- ★ **Our Blog: a place to enhance written discourse and media citizenship among students.**

Teaching and learning are social activities; today's kids are connected in ways that no adult over twenty-five could have imagined just five years ago. Students today enjoy the connectedness of social networking; it is part of their very being. Our goal is to bring instruction into that cloud to teach the content required in ways that inspire online responsibility and ethics in this new, very public world.

# Writing

## Ms Edwards

Consider Create Connect Collaborate

Eagles Write  
<http://eagleswrite.edublogs.org/>  
What Else  
<http://whatelse.edublogs.org/>

Home Page: <http://write.msdeagles.org>

Our Journey into the cloud.  
What else could we write?  
How else could we say it better?  
What Else?

Example of Parent Handout page 1

## WHAT IS A BLOG?

A log is like a journal, a place to express your ideas. A weblog is a journal on the world wide web (www), the Internet. A blog is short for "web-log." It's purpose is to share ideas with others to add to an ongoing conversation about topics of interest to the "bloggers." Others then comment on that blog so they can add more to the conversation.

## WHY BLOG?

In this changed world, our students will be expected to participate online in responsible ways. Education now includes guiding students in this new read-write web. That's right, the "Internet" is now not only readable, it's writable.

Our students learn to navigate safely and responsibly through the web by participating in blogs and wikis on topics of interest to them. They research and **consider** others' ideas, **create** their own ideas on blogs, **connect** to others in comments, and **collaborate** to clarify and extend the conversation about their topics.

Through these connections, students apply their research and social skills to clearly write their ideas, converse with others in positive and supportive ways, and continue the conversation that adds knowledge and solutions to issues that concern them.

They create an online identity of which they can be proud citizens of this changed world.

## WILL YOU JOIN US?

- ★ **Read**  
<http://whatelse.edublogs.org/>  
The Teacher Blog  
<http://eagleswrite.edublogs.org/>  
The Class Blog
- ★ **Subscribe**  
In the left column, just enter your email address in the "Subscribe" area. You will receive an email when changes occur.

Read the blog's **PAGES** for more information

Comment  
Comments continue the conversation. We love them! Just click "Comments" under the title of the blog post. Please only use your first name.

Can you hear me now?  
Remember: A blog comment is your footprint... a path back to you... prepare your path wisely.

## LEAVE A COMMENT

Name  
Mail  
Weblog  
Anti-spam word (Required):  
sdontspamme

Type your comment in the box

Remember to click **SUBMIT**

## View Categories

Look for your student's name under categories to discover their posts. Just click the drop-down menu.

Drop down menu  
Look for your student's code name

Remember: A blog comment is your footprint... a path back to you... prepare your path wisely.

[sheri@msdeagles.org](http://sheri@msdeagles.org)

Example of Parent Handout page 2

Here's [Kirsten Tschofen's parent consent form and parent handout](#). If your school or school district doesn't have a consent form then we recommend you discuss what needs to be included if you develop your own form.

Proper Use and Consent Form for On-Line Activities

Print Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- I agree to follow the Digital Citizenship Guidelines.
- I understand that breaking the intent of these guidelines will result in the loss of my Internet privileges.
- I agree to have my work posted on walkthisway1.edublogs.org

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Print Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply:

- I have discussed the guidelines for Digital Citizenship with my child.
- I understand that breaking the intent of these guidelines will result in the loss of my child's Internet privileges.
- I agree to have my child's **work** posted
- I agree to have **photographs** posted
- I agree to have **video of my child** posted
- I agree to have **voice recordings** posted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

NB Participation in the class and individual blogs is not mandatory. Please come see me if you have any questions or concerns.

This work by Kirsten Tschofen is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Example of a parent consent form

Here's [2Km and 2KJ Blog information note](#) designed to help parents know: what is a blog, the blog URL, why they blog and their safety guidelines.



Here's [10 Steps to Navigating 2M and 2KJ blog](#) for helping them understand blog jargon, subscribe to email notification, leave comments and so on.

#8. Have parent information nights.

#9. Set up [email subscription](#) for notification of new posts

It's as simple as:

1. Go to **Appearance > Widgets**

## 2011 2KM and 2KJ Class Blog

**Dear Parents,**

2KM and 2KJ have a new joint blog for both classes to work on and follow in 2011. We use a blogging platform called Global2 which is supported by the Victorian Education Department.


**About our blog**

If you are unfamiliar with blogs, they are like online journals. Blogs are essentially websites where administrators (in our case Miss Jordan, Mrs Morris and 2KJ/2KM students) can add posts which are displayed in reverse chronological order. There are panels on the side (called widgets) where you can find past posts, recent comments, our global visitors and more.

We use our blog to add information about what is happening in 2KM and 2KJ and to connect with parents and classes around the world.

Our blog address is

<http://2kmand2kj.global2.vic.edu.au>



**Why blog?**

This is the fourth year Miss Jordan and Mrs Morris have had class blogs and they've seen so many **benefits** for their students.

Blogs are great because you can share things with a **wide audience**. Instead of just the teacher seeing the students' work, all of the parents can view the work and leave comments. Having a blog helps to strengthen home-school partnerships and build a sense of classroom community.

Using blogs is also a great way for students to improve their **ICT skills** and get experience using an emerging technology.

Students improve their **literacy skills** while blogging and it a fantastic opportunity for students to learn about **appropriate online behaviours**.

One of the most rewarding experiences from blogging is the **global connections** we make. We are able to communicate and even Skype with our blogging buddies from **all over the world**. Blogs **flatten** our classroom walls!

**Safety**

**Internet safety** is of utmost important to us. Through blogging, the students in 2KM and 2KJ will have the opportunity to learn about **appropriate online behaviours** in an **authentic and supervised setting**.

The following guidelines have been established to ensure the safety of our students when blogging.

- Students will only be identified by their first name.
- Posts written by students are checked by Miss Jordan or Mrs Morris before they are published on the blog.
- Posts will not include personal details about students such as addresses and family information.
- All comments submitted have to be approved by Miss Jordan or Mrs Morris before they are included on the blog.
- All students must have parental permission to have their photo and work posted on the blog.
- Parents who leave comments are asked to use their first name only so as not to identify their child.
- All students must abide by the blogging rules that we have established as a class.

**If you have any other questions about the 2KM and 2KJ Blog, please contact Mrs Morris or Miss Jordan.**

[morris.kathleen.a@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:morris.kathleen.a@edumail.vic.gov.au)

[jordan.kathy.a@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:jordan.kathy.a@edumail.vic.gov.au)

We will send home more information to help you navigate our class blog soon!

Please return the attached permission form ASAP to allow your child to begin their blogging journey!

## 10 STEPS TO NAVIGATING THE 2KM AND 2KJ BLOG

<http://2kmand2kj.global2.vic.edu.au>

### 1. BLOG JARGON...

**Blog:** Short for "weblog", a blog is a website that is like an online journal which is regularly updated. A blog is made up of a collection of posts. Each new post that is published moves to the top of the blog. Readers can comment on blog posts. Blogs often contain pages too.

**Post:** These are found on the home page of the blog and contain a title and text. Some posts also contain photos, images, videos, slideshows and links to other sites. Posts sometimes end with questions for readers. Readers are encouraged to comment on posts.

**Page:** You can find pages at the top of the blog (on some other blogs, they might be on the side). Pages contain static information that doesn't change regularly such as information about the blog.

**Comment:** Comments make blogs come alive! They allow the blog to become an interactive space where people can connect, converse and offer their thoughts and opinions. The administrators of the blog (in our case Miss Jordan and Mrs Morris) moderate and screen all comments.

**Category:** When posts are written they are usually put into a category. This helps people find collections of posts on topics that interest them. On the 2KM/2KJ blog each student has their own category.

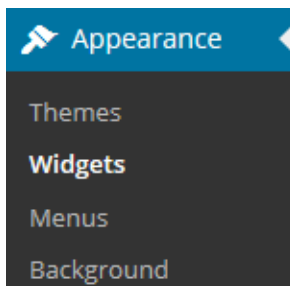
### 2. SUBSCRIBE...

To save you the hassle of having to check back to the 2KM/2KJ blog all the time to see whether there is anything new on there, we have set up an email subscription service. To subscribe, you simply need to enter your email address in the box on the left hand side of the blog. You will then get an email each time we post something new on the blog! You can click on the link in your email to visit the blog and leave a comment.



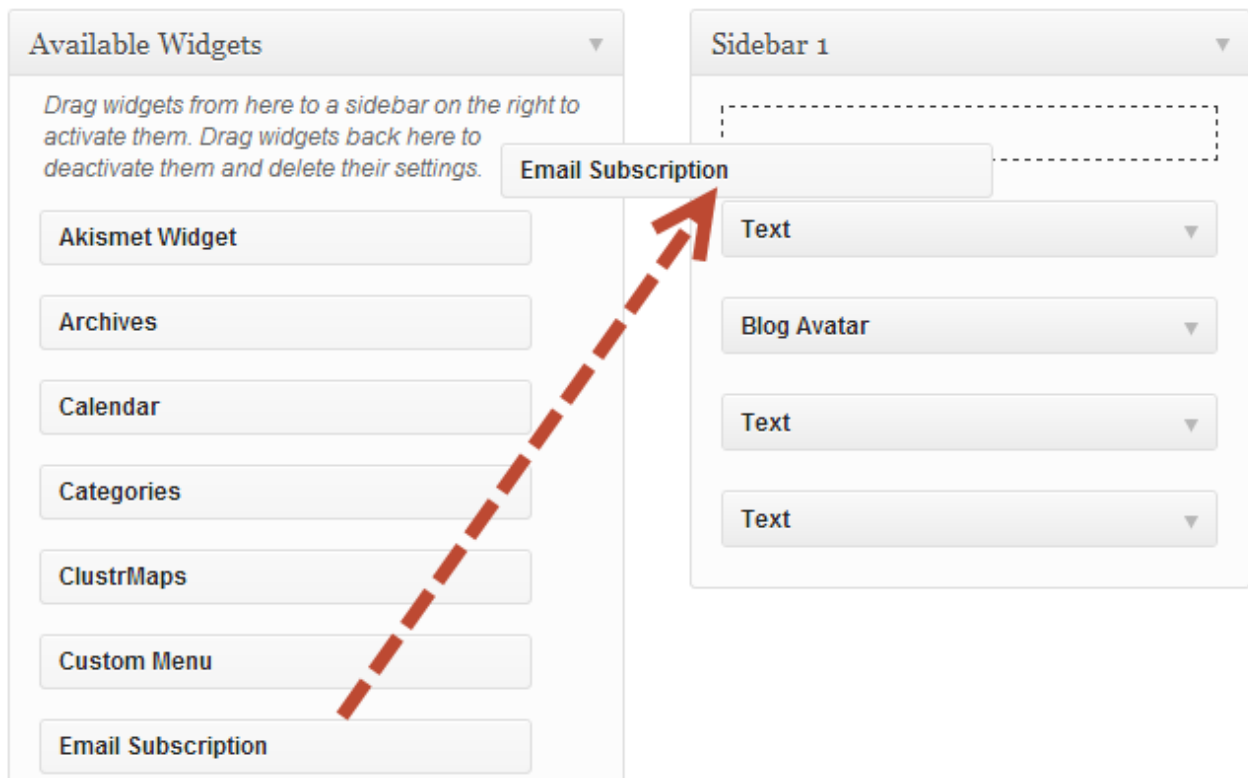
Kathleen Morris 2011

<http://primarytech.global2.vic.edu.au>

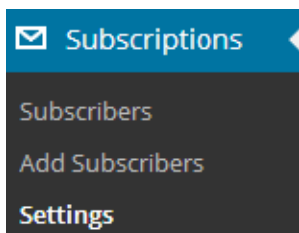


2. Add the email subscription widget to your sidebar.

## Widgets



3. Go to **Subscriptions > Settings**



4. Click on **Mail Template** and personalize — if you want to customize the look.



General Settings

Mail Template

### Styling Settings

Show full post content

If checked, full content

Emails complete post including all images

Logo for email notifications

Upload logo



Adds your own logo

Remove logo

Show featured images

If your theme allows it, will include the featured

Header color

#e1f1fe

Header text color

#0f8dd2

Customize the colors

Here's example of part of a full post email notification:

**edublogs** THE EDUBLOGGER

## New! Create and manage student blogs in 5 simple steps

[Create and manage student blogs in 5 simple steps](#)

We're seeing increasing numbers of educators use blogs as digital student portfolios, where students showcase their work learning, throughout their school life.

Why?

- Studies have found that the effort of communicating to someone else forces you to pay more attention and learn [Thomspson](#)).
- When students were asked to write for a real audience in another country, their essays had better organization and they were writing for their teacher ([Clive Thomspson](#)).
- Digital student portfolios can be used for application to colleges, Universities or for applying for jobs.
- We all have increased motivation when we feel personal ownership. You see greater improvements in student skills when each student has their own student blog. Blogs allow students to easily transfer the digital student portfolio to their personal space as all standard blogging platforms allow you to easily transfer content between platforms using [€](#)

You can read more about the [benefits of student blogging and digital student portfolios here!](#)

Full post email

5. Click on **General Settings** and customize your settings (optional).

**General Settings** | Mail Template

**General Settings**

From name: The Edublogger

Reply-to email address: no-reply@edublogs.org  
*Recommended: no-reply@yourdomain.com as spam filters may block*

Email subject: New! %title%  
You can use %title% to show the latest post title. Will show no more

Send how often?: Immediately when a new post is published  
Immediately when a new post is published  
Send a weekly digest with all posts from the previous week  
Send a daily digest with all posts from the previous 24 hours  
Never  
Manually

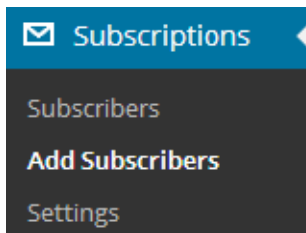
Display a follow button?

Get notifications?  Get notification when a user subscribes/unsubscribes to this em

**Save Changes**

**Other options**

6. You can even add email subscribers using **Subscriptions > Add Subscribers!**



## WHAT NOW?

How did you go?

We would love to hear which you've decided to try! Leave a comment below to let us know.

Also feel free to leave any questions you are having (or tips/advice) as well.

Or go to [Step 7: Fair use, copyright, and intro to using images](#)