Step 6: Help parents and students connect

by Sue Waters   April 28, 2014

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:

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.
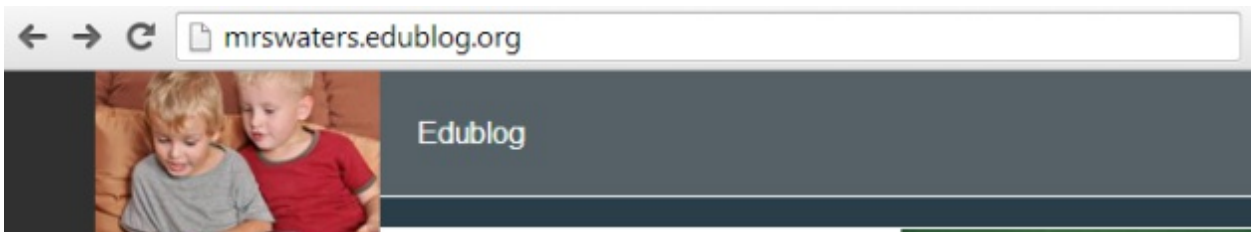
First part of the blog URL incorrect

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.
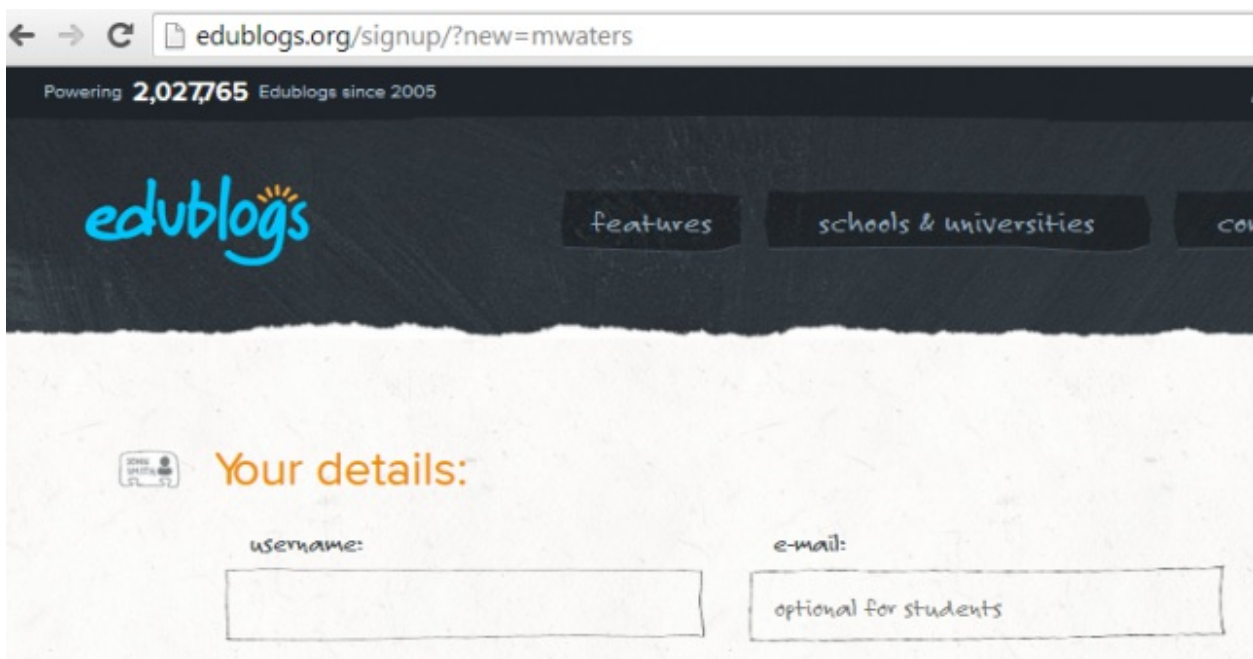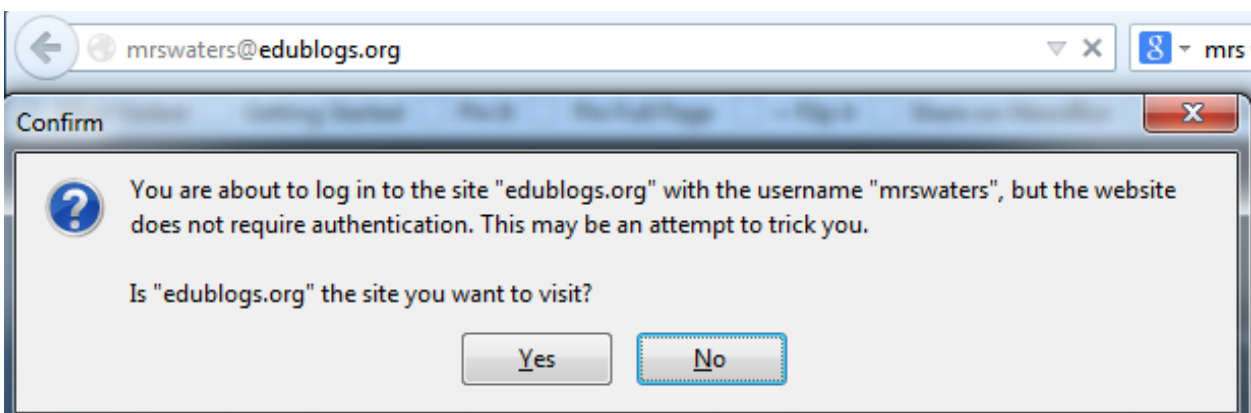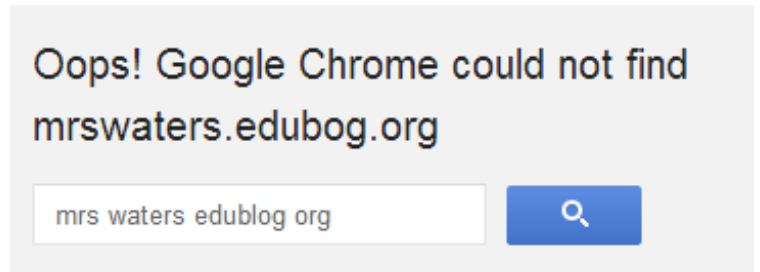

Edublogs.org spelt wrong

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
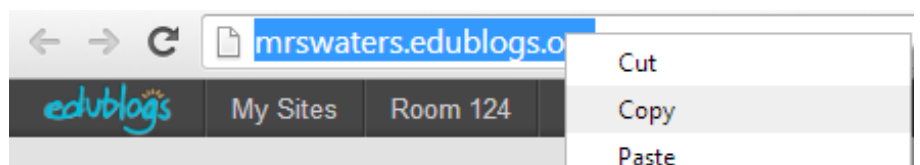
Example of a business card

#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/
- Mrs. Schmidt's Classroom Blog - http://mrstinaschmidt.edublogs.org/
- Mr Salsich's Class - http://jmsalsich.edublogs.org/
- Mr Baldock's Class blog - http://mrbaldock.edublogs.org/
- Mrs. Hamman's Class Blog - http://blogs.goaj.org/mrshamman/
- Mr. Miller's Classroom Blog - http://mrmillersblog.com/

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

~Linda

☼ ☼ ☼
Check Out Our Award Winning Classroom Blog!
Mrs. Yollis' Classroom Blog
Yollis' 365 Blog

Kathleen Morris
Leopold Primary School

Email: morris.kathleen.a@edumail.vic.gov.au
Blog: http://primarytech.global2.vic.edu.au
Class blog: http://4kmand4kj.global2.vic.edu.au
Twitter: http://twitter.com/kathleen_morris
Tech Tools for Teachers: http://www.teachgennow.com.au/

Examples of email signatures

#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.
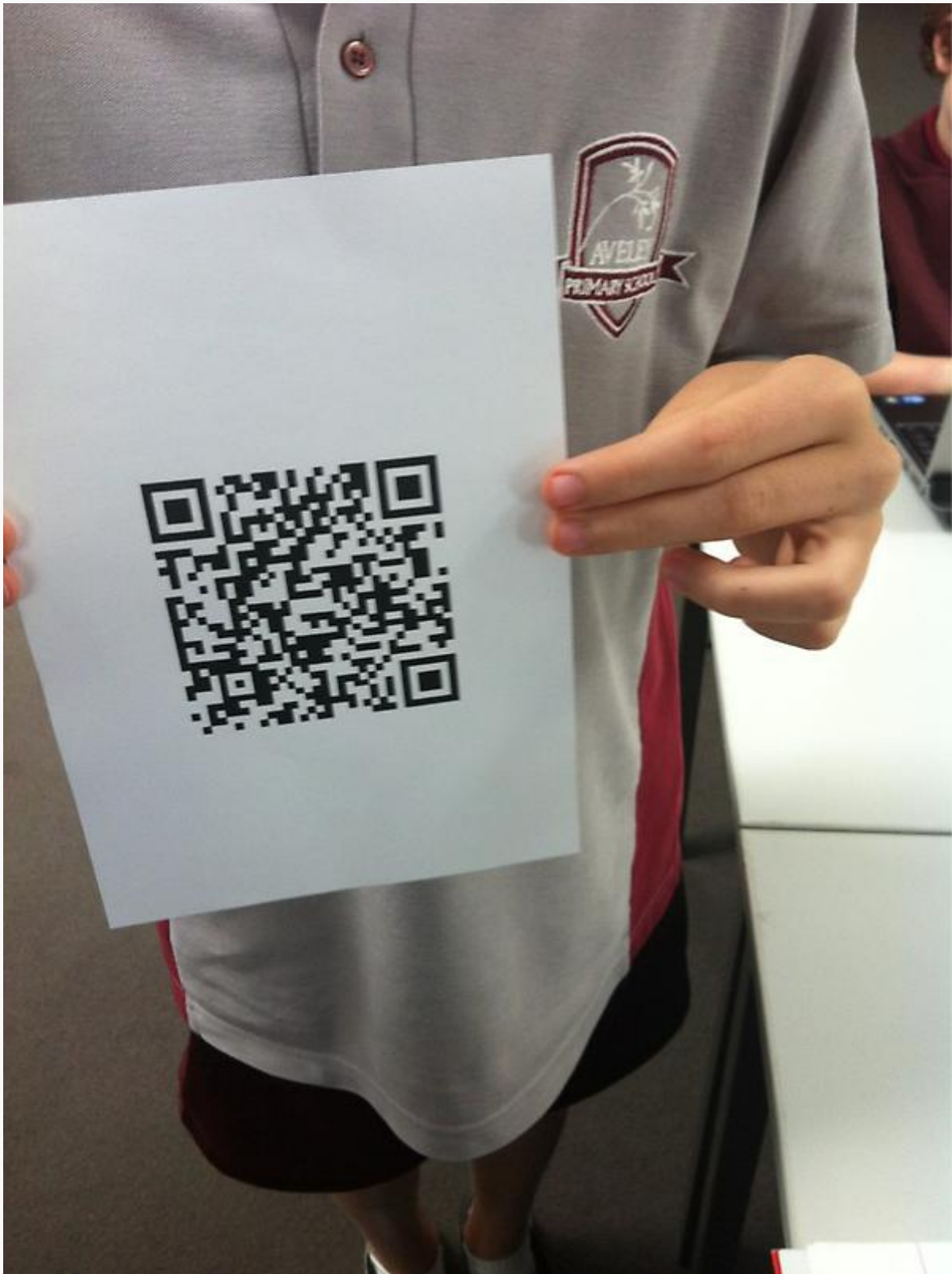
Example of a QR code

#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.

Example of Parent Handout page 1

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.

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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**

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.
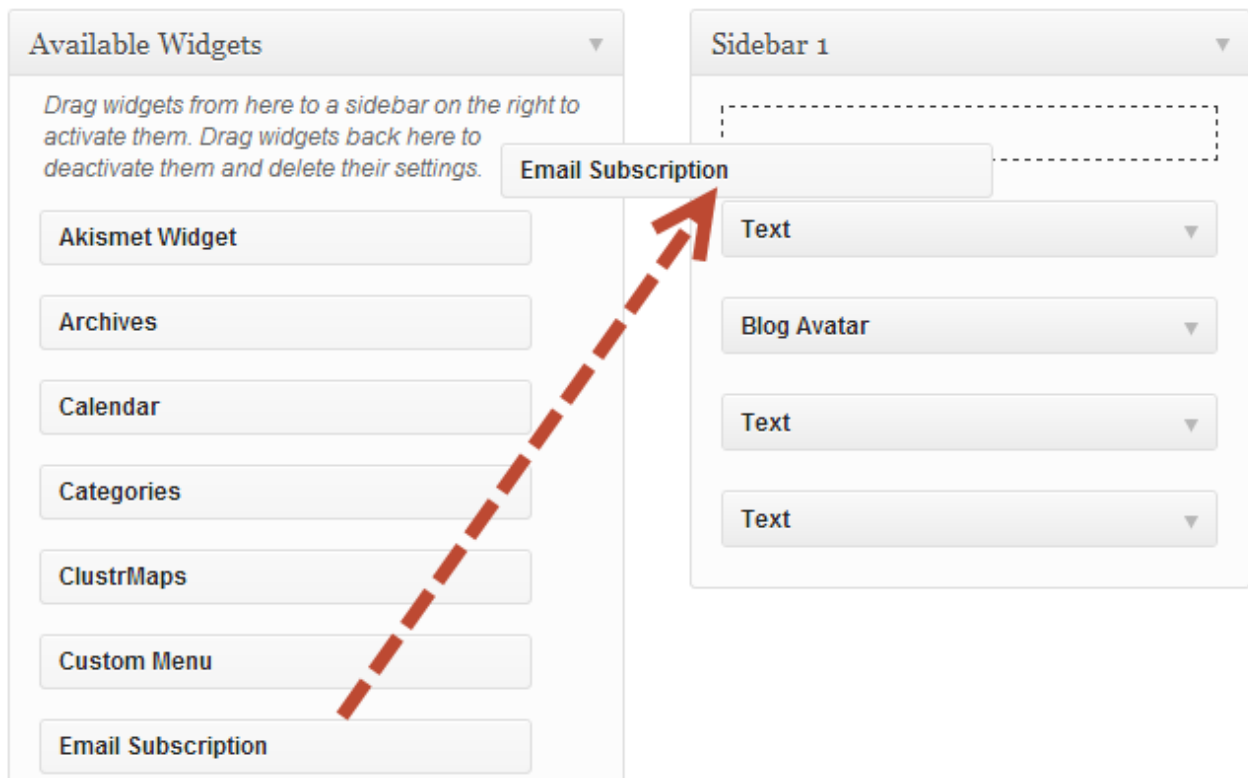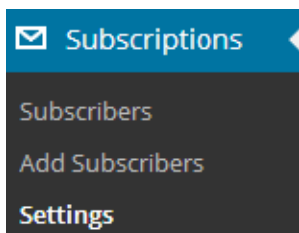
Kathleen Morris 2011   http://primarytech.global2.vic.edu.au
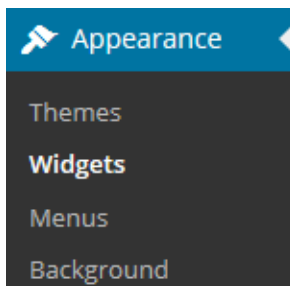
2. Add the email subscription widget to your sidebar.

3. Go to **Subscriptions > Settings**

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

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

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

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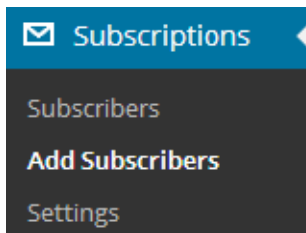
WHAT NOW?

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