

Context of the Performance Assessment

This performance assessment has been designed for fourth grade students as a collaborative project between the computer lab, library, and fourth grade classrooms. It will give students an online forum to practice appropriate digital communication skills as they discuss books they have read. Indian Trails Elementary has three sections of fourth grade and each teacher approaches reading requirements and incentives a little differently. This performance assessment will not focus on a specific genre, reading program, or reading level; it will focus on what students are reading and will be flexible enough to allow students to pick their books or classroom teachers to assign genres, reading levels, or specific books to their students. Any book will fit into this conversation and students from other classes will be able to participate with each other.

The goals of this PA are:

1. Provide a moderated online forum for students to practice appropriate digital communication.
2. Give students a place to talk about the books they are reading in an effort to encourage reading.

The primary goal is appropriate digital communication and this is what we will assess. By focusing the conversation on reading, we are providing a school-appropriate topic in which all students can participate. Students may volunteer personal information while talking about their connection to a text, but a student who is not willing to share personal information can still fully participate in this online conversation.

The objectives that will be assessed are taken from the Student NETS 5.

NETS 5. Digital Citizenship Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior. Students:

- a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.
- b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity.
- d. exhibit leadership for digital citizenship.

Indian Trails Elementary is becoming a "Leader In Me" School (<http://www.theleaderinme.org/>) next year. I have included the leadership standard above to fit within this school-wide focus. I have also used language in this project that aligns with this focus. This language is based on the "[Seven Habits of Happy Kids](#)" developed by Steven Covey.

1. Be Proactive (You are in charge of yourself and your decisions)

2. Begin with the End in Mind (Set and Goal and work towards it)
3. Put First Things First (Work, then play)
4. Think win-win (Solutions should benefit everyone)
5. Seek First to Understand then be Understood (Listen, then talk)
6. Synergize (Work together)
7. Sharpen the Saw (Play)

Essential Questions

Why is it important to communicate clearly and appropriately in text-based conversations?

Why do people participate in online communication?

How do you provide leadership in online communities?

GRASPS Task Design

Goal

Finding a "just right" book is often difficult. Merely finding a book at your reading level is not hard with modern library catalogs, but discovering a book that grabs your attention from beginning to end is a challenge for most readers. One of the best ways to find new books that interest you are recommendations from friends. Our goal is to create an online conversation about books to help each other find new books to read. By participating in this conversation, everyone involved benefits by finding new books and having the opportunity to talk about the books we have read.

Role

Your job in this online conversation will be to share books that you have enjoyed reading, and finding new books you enjoy reading from the recommendations of your classmates. The online conversation will not be one way; you will also have the opportunity to respond to your classmates recommendations with questions, suggestions for other books, and your opinion of the book they recommended.

In an online conversation, it is very important that we seek first to understand, then be understood. Your communication must be on topic, easy to understand, positive, encouraging, and school appropriate.

Audience

Your readers will be your teachers and classmates, but may soon become any student or teacher at Indian Trails Elementary. (Since these blogs will be hosted on the Internet, anyone with an Internet connected device could potentially read your postings and comments.) Keeping this in mind, try to communicate positively and clearly so that anyone reading your blog does not misunderstand your ideas or intent.

Situation

The challenge of participating in a online text-based conversation well is communicating clearly and positively. You will find it challenging to communicate in a way that will not possibly confuse or upset the reader of your message. This challenges presented through online communication will be worth the

effort because of the unique advantages of online communication tools. The benefits of participating in an online text-based conversation are the ability to communicate at any time and from any location, the chance to communicate with people who are outside of your class, and having a written record that you can read whenever needed.

Product, Performance, and Purpose

You will create blog posts that demonstrates your understanding of a book that persuades other students to read or not read the book. Your blog posts and comments should also demonstrate your understanding of appropriate online communication skills. A neutral, fact-only post will not meet this goal; you will need to develop your ideas into something that positively encourages people to listen to your thoughts and respond to your blog post with their own ideas and reactions to the book. We should hear your voice in your blog posts and comments, but remember to keep your voice positive. This will not be a one-way conversation, everyone will take turns being a writer and a reader.

Standards and Criteria for Success

Your work will be judged by the organization of your ideas and opinions (your voice), positive communication skills, and your participation in the online conversation. You will not only be graded on your original blog posts, but how you respond to the posts of other students. I will use a rubric to assess your participation and understanding of proper online communication; we will talk through this rubric before we write our first blog post or respond to the recommendations of our classmates.

When participating in our online conversation you should:

1. Explain your opinion in a clear and appropriate manner.
2. Interpret the writing of other bloggers in a positive way. Do not jump to conclusions or assume the worst as you read.
3. Apply your knowledge of appropriate online communication every time you participate.
4. Justify your perspective and opinions in positive terms. Tell us why you like or dislike something.
5. Seek first to understand your classmates--appreciate the point of view of your classmates.
6. Accept feedback from your classmates, even if they don't agree with you.
7. Self-assess your online communication skills before submitting a post or response. Once you submit it, it can be read by anyone who has access to the internet.

Description of the Performance Task

As I developed my description, my thoughts took two different angles on the same task. I haven't quite decided which to use, so I have included both.

Blogging about Books (technology, library, ELA; fourth grade)

1. We have all stood at a library shelf with our library card in hand wondering which book to check out and read. The decision is sometimes difficult, but we have a great resource nearby to help

us pick out books--our classmates. The Indian Trails Library and computer lab is hosting a blog for fourth graders to talk about the books so that we can help each other find interesting books to read. You can access this blog in the library, the computer lab, or any computer with internet access. Because this will be posted on the internet and many people will see it, how you communicate is important. Your blog posts will only be accepted and published on our blog if you 1)communicate your ideas and opinions positively, 2)use the seven habits in all you online communications, and 3)communicate clearly so you are not misunderstood. Conversing through text is more difficult than face to face; you will not have non-verbal cues, tone of voice, or body language to help convey your message. Good online communication is written in such a way that readers will not be confused or offended. This will not be a one way conversation; your classmates will be able to comment on your blog posts with questions or additional thoughts on books. You will discuss appropriate online behavior during computers and have a chance to practice appropriate online communications with the help of your teachers.

2. A major publisher of children's literature has invited you to create a blog of what you are reading as a way to promote books to elementary students. It will be read by fourth grade students from other schools and they will be able to comment on your postings. Because this will be posted on the internet and many people will see it, how you communicate is important. Your blog posts will only be accepted and published on the web if you 1)communicate your ideas and opinions positively, 2)use the seven habits in all you online communications, and 3)communicate clearly so you are not misunderstood. Conversing through text is more difficult than face to face; you will not have non-verbal cues, tone of voice, or body language to help convey your message. Good online communication is written in such a way that readers will not be confused or offended.

Performance Assessment Plan

Due to reorganizing of staff within our district next year, I will serve as the librarian and the certified staff member in charge of the computer lab. A paraprofessional will be teaching the computer classes in the lab, but I will be responsible for curriculum and overseeing the instruction. I am writing this plan with the intent of creating overlap between the library, computer lab, and fourth grade homerooms. The roles and responsibilities of each segment are listed below:

Library

I will use my influence to encourage participation in the blogging by talking about it throughout the school year in conjunction with book talks, author focuses, and library lessons. I may also find opportunities to include short blogging assignments in the library. Each class only has 30 minutes in the

library each week for a short lesson and checkout, thus there will not be much time for blogging during the scheduled library time. Students who cannot check out books because of overdue materials will have the option to check the reading blogs and respond if computers are available (the computers are also used for our online library catalog).

There are twelve computers in the library and they may be used for blogging before school or when the homeroom teachers allows students to come to the library during the day. I will encourage the fourth grade teachers to schedule times during the week when small groups of students can come to the library and participate in this project.

Computer Lab

A large portion of the blogging will be accomplished in the computer lab as this is where students have scheduled access (every fourth day) to computers. Since the objectives of the project are included in the technology curriculum, this activity will easily fit within this class and time can be allocated for blogging. The computer lab paraprofessional will assess the blog entries using the included rubric. This score will be reported as part of the computer grade on each student's report card.

Homerooms

Each student will have a data notebook as part of the "Leader In Me" focus. This notebook will contain artifacts from all subjects as well as pages devoted to goal setting and progress tracking. Part of these goals will be reading goals. Teachers will help students set individual reading goals for a month or quarter and track their progress in meeting those goals. The homeroom teachers will help students set their reading goals based on their reading interests and abilities. They will also help students track their progress towards meeting their reading goals. Teachers will have access to the blogs and can write their own blogs and comment on what their students are writing. I am hoping that the teachers will encourage their students to participate by participating themselves. This will provide teachers a place to interact with their students and provide feedback about what their students are reading. It will also give teachers a place to recommend other books for students to read. I will discourage homeroom teachers from assessing the blogs beyond progress monitoring for each student's reading goal. I do not want students to feel that every writing convention will be scrutinized in their blog postings. Homeroom teachers will also be able to address the general tone of their student's blogs and hold class meetings to celebrate success or correct problems if necessary. This will be a good opportunity for teachers and students to discuss the seven habits and how students are using them when they communicate through the blog and work to meet their reading goals.

Implementation Steps:

The instructions for this portion of the assignment require enough detail that another person could easily implement this task. Because this project involves multiple staff members across several months of time, it would be impossible for any one person to step in and independently implement it. The collaborative nature of this task will facilitate the quick orientation of any staff member who is included in the project after it begins. I anticipate learning much about the process once we get started and begin using the district's new website; I also know we will learn from each other as we see ways to improve the project.

Teachers will begin by helping their students establish reading goals and recording these in their data notebooks. The computer para will cover appropriate online communication, and I will introduce the blogs as a way of tracking our progress towards meeting our reading goals. The computer teacher will then give more detailed instruction in using the blogs including gaining access, creating content, and editing content. The initial blog post will be a description of the student's reading goal and any goals focusing on how they will use this blog to track their progress towards meeting their reading goals. All staff involved will encourage students to blog often rather than waiting until they finish a book to blog. We will also encourage them to read the blog posts of other students and respond with comments.

As students begin to blog, the computer para will assess them on appropriate communication and bring any issues with individual students to the attention of the classroom teachers or me. Since the classroom teachers and I will also be reading the blogs, we will have the ability to address issues as we see them. The computer para will periodically review appropriate online communication and help students apply the seven habits to set goals for future communication. I will provide time before school for blogging in the library and encourage teachers to schedule time throughout the week when students can use the library for blogging, and also encourage students to blog when I see them in the library. I will also continuously encourage students to check out books that will help them meet their reading goals. At the end of the time period set in the reading goals, students will be assigned to write a reflective blog about their goal and the effort towards meeting it.

This cycle will continue throughout the year as students set new reading goals each month or quarter, read new books, write new blog posts, comment on the blog posts of their classmates, and reflect on their own progress.

Rubric

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Below Basic
Online Communication				
Blog Post	You choose your words carefully to present your opinions in a way that will not upset your readers. You use school-appropriate language and state negative opinions in a positive, inoffensive way. Your ideas are easy to understand and do not confuse the reader. You write your post in a way that encourages your readers to respond.	You choose your words carefully to present your opinions in a way that will not upset your readers. You use school-appropriate language and state negative opinions in a positive, inoffensive way.	Your language is appropriate, but your ideas are unclear and may confuse or upset the reader.	You use inappropriate language or attitudes in your writing. You put down anyone who would disagree with you.
Comments/ Response	You choose your words carefully to present your opinions in a way that will not upset your readers. You use school-appropriate language and state negative opinions in a positive, inoffensive way. Your ideas are easy to understand and do not confuse the reader. Your comments continue the conversation and encourage other readers to participate.	You choose your words carefully to present your opinions in a way that will not upset your readers. You use school-appropriate language and state negative opinions in a positive, inoffensive way. Your comments are on topic and continues the conversation.	Your language is appropriate, but your ideas are unclear and may confuse or upset the reader. Most of your comments are on topic and attempt to continue the conversation.	You use inappropriate language or attitudes in your writing. You put down anyone who would disagree with you. Your ideas are not on topic and do not continue the conversation
Participation				
Blog Post	Your blog post presents the book in a way that makes your readers want to respond to	Your blog post presents the book clearly and contains enough	Your blog entry contains information about a book, but it not	No original blog posting provided

	your ideas. It is on topic and clearly represents the book with enough information for your readers to decide if they would like to read the book themselves.	information for readers to decide if they would like to read the book themselves.	detailed enough for your readers to make a decision about reading the book themselves.	
Comments/ Response	Your response is on topic and responds to the points in the original posting. It contains new ideas or questions and your comments encourage others to continue the conversation.	Your response is on topic and responds to the points in the original posting.	You provide a minimal response with no original ideas. Response is off topic. Your comment does not add to or continue the conversation. Short, unsupported response such as "I agree," or "I liked the book too."	No comments provided to other blogger's postings.
Writing				
	You have proofread your posts and comments carefully and they do not contain spelling and grammar errors.	There are a few spelling and grammar errors, but your ideas can still be understood.	Spelling and grammar errors make it hard to understand your ideas.	There are many spelling and grammar errors that make it impossible to understand your ideas.
Leadership				
	Blog posts and comments always employ one or more of the seven habits.	Blog posts and comments employ the seven habits most of the time.	Blog posts and comments sometimes employ the seven habits.	Blog posts and comments do not employ the seven habits.

Narrative

Description of Technology Used

Our district is beginning a contract with a new website provider next school year. Although I have not seen this new website, I am hoping that it has flexible blogging and discussion board capabilities that allow for student communication. I have been told that students in the high school and middle school will be given email address through the website and this may include the ability for students to have their own online identities within the website. If the fourth grade has this function available, it will make it easy for each student to have their own online identity and blog within a secure environment. If these functions are not available or user friendly, I will use an separate web tool such as [Kidsblog.org](https://kidsblog.org) to facilitate our online conversation.

Whichever specific tool I choose to use, each student will have their own blog within a secure space. Students within a class will be able to see the blogs of their classmates and respond with comments. Since each student will have a personal account, it will be easy to track who is posting and assess participation. If the blog has the ability to require pre-approval before a blog or comment is posted, I may configure the blog to email me and the classroom teachers when something is posted so that we are aware of new content to the blog.

Since this task assesses appropriate online communication, the blog will provide a functional online space for this conversation to occur. The availability of classmates, teachers, and administrators to view their blogs and comments will create a public arena similar to a public Internet blog, while protecting students from users outside of the school. This technology can be used by any staff member or administrator to assess appropriate online communication between students. Individual accounts will establish a high degree of accountability for students, and they will be held responsible for what they post to the blog.

My Thought Process

I found out in March that I will be put in charge of the computer lab and classes in my building next year in addition to my existing library duties. As I started thinking about the focus of this project, I wanted something that I could use in the library and the computer lab as well. One of my biggest challenges in the library is time, and only having 30 minutes a week (which also includes checkout) with my students places many limitations on my what I can accomplish. I had tried blogging at the beginning of this year, but there was not time to properly explain and model blogging, and allow students time to practice communicating through a text-based online interface. Once they understood the process, it would have also been difficult to allow them enough time to truly benefit from the blogging experience. I still wanted to use blogging in the library, but I knew would need to draw on other resources to make it happen. Now that I have influence over the computer classes, I can implement this activity to cover digital citizenship objectives while focusing on a topic in which every student can participate.

My building is beginning a new initiative next year and we are becoming a "Leader In Me" School. Part of this program includes every student maintaining a data notebook. This notebook contains artifacts of their work, along with goal setting and tracking sheets. To ensure that individual reading goals are included with the goals students make, I am part of the committee that will determine the contents of the data notebooks for next year. In designing this project, I also wanted something that classroom teachers could use to track student progress towards meeting their reading goals. I will also encourage the fourth grade teachers, along with our literacy coach, Title I teacher, and principal, to keep their own reading blog and respond to student blog posts.

Beginning the process of backwards designing this project was complicated by the fact that I wanted this to serve so many purposes and be used in so many places. I began by thinking through each section of the template on page 22 of the text and contacting the instructors of this course with my initial ideas. In response to instructor feedback, I narrowed down the objectives to appropriate use of online communication and based my rubric on these objectives. The benefits provided by the discussion of books and reading would be a secondary focus of the project; this area is more subjective and would take more time to assess considering all the facets of writing that could be included in a rubric. Plus, I want my students to communicate freely without the fear of every spelling and grammar error counting against them. Writing the GRASPS task and rubric helped me define exactly what I would assess and the desired results of the project. As I continued writing the other sections of this project, I was able to further focus my ideas. By writing things down, anything that was not consistent or fully developed became obvious; I quickly discovered the gaps in my understanding and took the steps necessary to gain a better understanding of the required skills and processes needed to develop this project.

When I taught music, most class activities were in preparation for a class or public performance. It was a challenge backwards designing a task for a non-musical performance.

How I designed this project to address the Six Facets of Understanding

Can Explain

Students must explain their opinions in a clear and appropriate manner within a text-based conversation to be understood. This takes some practice, and this activity will give them opportunities to practice in a safe environment. With the other students in close proximity, misunderstandings can more easily be resolved than with someone in a different geographic location. Misunderstandings will provide teachable moments where students or the class can discuss alternative ways to communicate the same thought, but in a clearer manner.

Can Interpret

Students must seek first to understand and strive to interpret the writing of other bloggers in a positive way. By giving the writer the benefit of the doubt, students do not jump to conclusions or assume the worst based on what they read. This is another skill that takes practice and teachable moments will likely be created when students misunderstand what they read. This concept loops with being able to explain as described above. Since communication involves coding and decoding, students must work on their skills in both areas.

Can Apply

Students will have opportunities to apply their knowledge of appropriate online communication and the Seven Habits every time they participate in the blog. This will be a challenge for some students who can apply the requirements when they want to, but struggle with appropriate communication when their present circumstances or mood discourage them from participating correctly.

Sees in Perspective

As students communicate, they will be required to justify their perspective and opinions in positive terms and then interpret what they read in positive terms considering the writer's point of view--before they apply their own opinions to the message. This should provide opportunities to discuss many of the Seven Habits.

Demonstrates Empathy

Students will have multiple opportunities to seek first to understand their classmates and appreciate the point of view of their classmates regardless of how they personally view the subject.

Reveals Self-Knowledge

This project will give students opportunities to accept feedback from their classmates, even if they don't agree with the feedback. They will be encouraged to see beyond the limitations or biases of their own opinions as they are confronted with conflicting ideas.

Students will be encouraged to self-assess their online communication skills before submitting a post or response. This reflection before finalizing a communication requires anticipating any potential misunderstandings contained in their writing, considering how other people will interpret their writing, and leaving room for a productive discussion of their ideas.

Self-Assessment

I may have made this harder on myself than necessary; as a librarian, I approached this task differently than a classroom teacher since I do not have my own class of students and see approximately 350 students a week for only 30 minutes per class. This is a large project that involves an entire grade level, multiple teachers, and multiple locations throughout the building. Regardless of the challenges I created for myself, I wanted this project to be something I could actually use next year. Even if I modify this project before August, I had been able to dedicate time to thinking about how I will use blogging in the library and computer lab to teach appropriate communication skills while giving students a place to talk about the books they are reading. I do not expect the ideas and procedures outlined in the project to stay set in stone; I anticipate that I will need to make changes and adapt this task during all phases of implementation. By involving the fourth grade teachers, they will be able to provide ideas and modifications to improve how we assess online communication and encourage students to talk about reading. My building is very comfortable collaborating, and I look forward to their feedback after they have observed their students blogging and participated in the blogging process themselves.

Wiggins would quickly realize this is the first time I have devoted a high amount of energy and time to backwards designing a non-musical performance task. I have consulted the textbook often and sought

help from my instructors at various point in this process. If mistakes or omissions were made, it was not because I intentionally ignored something. I would hope that Wiggins would see potential for tasks I will design in the future as my understanding of this process matures.

My initial goals for this project were creating something I could use in the library and computer lab (and something I would actually use), creating something that would provide students a secure space to practice communicating online, and creating something that would encourage students to read. Although I have made course corrections along the way and decided against assessing the writing convention included in blog posts, I have created a task that meets my big goals for this project while assessing online communication with a clear rubric. This would not likely have happened outside of this class; I would have likely read a few blog posts about student blogging, familiarized myself with the new web site and assigned an initial blog post. There would have been many reactive modifications along the way and much of the first year would be spent working the bugs out of this task. I still anticipate unforeseen problems as we implement this task, but I have already anticipated foreseen issues ahead of time, making the project stronger before it begins.

Printed Resources

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Websites/Blogs

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<http://langwitches.org/blog/2011/10/23/coming-soon-stepping-it-up-learning-about-blogs-for-your-students/>

<http://publicrelationsmatters.com/2009/05/18/guidelines-for-student-blogging/>

<https://www.eff.org/issues/bloggers/legal/students>

<http://thedublogger.com/tag/blogging-guidelines/>

<http://blogs.isb.ac.th/blogging-guidelines/>

<http://teacherchallenge.edublogs.org/2011/02/14/student-blogging-activity-1-setting-up-your-class-blog/>

<http://teenlearning.csla.net/blogging-guidelines-for-students/>

<http://edudemic.com/2012/02/blog-with-students/>

<http://blog.simplek12.com/education/15-awesome-ways-to-use-blogs-in-your-classrooms/>