**Personal Assessment and Reflection**

*This final project implements the key focus of bringing technology into the classroom to enhance the teaching, and the engagement and learning of the students the processes to achieve this have been defined in the Blogging Unit. The achievement objectives relate to national goals and expectations outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum Document and the instructional and engagement goals for the students are summarised in the learning intentions and success criteria.*

**Introducing the Unit of Work**

To introduce and engage the students I first asked them to complete the *pre-blogging* section of prompt/survey form. Then using ActivInspire software I made a flipchart and uploaded a world map. We looked at the world map to find out, *where in the world was Underwood Elementary School?* On the world map a student identified where Raleigh, North Carolina was and Hamilton New Zealand and linked them with an arrow line. We then discussed and recorded on the flipchart what a blog was and blogging netiquette. The students identified blogging as a *chat place* or *like face booking*. They believed good netiquette practice was to; *stay on the subject, keep* *comments brief* and use *no rude words*. Next the students were provided with an example of how they might introduce themselves and the topic of discussion, see the *write on board direction to site / examples of introductions:* of the teaching sequence.

**Class Session Summaries**

Class session summaries became whole class discussions around the meaning of the language used and a discussion resulted in how that related to cultural practices and differences. This can be seen in the comments by the students where they were asked to write a paragraph about the main differences and the main similarities between the two schools on the post-blogging section of the prompt/survey form. Some of their responses were:

* We have a Vege Village and Underwood Elementary has a green house.
* Underwood Elementary talks about drugs we do not.
* We introduced Underwood Elementary to nude food.

(Nude food is bringing food to school without wrappers to reduce rubbish waste).

* We have a larger amount of recycling bins.
* We have more gardens.

**Students’ Pre and Post Blogging Prompt and Survey Sheet**

Twenty-six of the twenty-nine students participated fully in this unit of work. Two students were overseas, one student is still to complete and hand in their response sheet.

**Discussion**

Using the web based site kidsblog.org and creating writing rooms using the name EcoSchools created an opportunity for the New Zealand (NZ) and American students to write and respond to questions posed in relation to their school’s environmental practices. Over the following two weeks all the NZ students engaged in blogging. Most all of the students actively engaged in this unit of work by asking to check their blog daily and they would voice disappointment if there had been no response.

The blog provided an opportunity for the students to ask questions and respond to questions asked of them. At times the NZ students needed to respond by clarifying the questions they had asked, what they meant and what it was they wanted to know.

All twenty-seven students who participated in this activity achieved the English Curriculum learning intention of writing texts and blogging explaining, describing and exchanging ideas and information about what it is to be an environmentally friendly school. All twenty-seven students achieved the Information Communications Technology learning intention of having communicated using technology as a tool – blogging. All twenty-seven students achieved the Environmental Studies learning intention of having explained and described how I sustainably care for my school environment.

Using the assessment rubric learning intentions of writing, participation and environmental studies overall nine students achieved, thirteen achieved above and four achieved and extended when assessed against the learning outcomes. One student is still to hand in their response sheet.

As the classroom teacher I found using blogging as an engagement tool for writing extremely successful most all of the NZ students regularly participated and contributed to the blog without being asked. They always replied to a blog and sometimes added to a past blog they had written to encourage a response. The NZ students used peer editing to help with posing questions and would check their answers with each other for spelling, grammar and punctuation. Many students appeared more conscientious about presentation and commented that it was because their recipients were not personally known to them. The blogging also generated a lot of oral discussion amongst the students; they were often sharing their responses from the American students with each other and making comment.

The NZ students became extremely excited when the American students said they were going to use the concept of *Nude Food* and introduce it into their school’s environmentally friendly practices to reduce waste and they were going to write a letter to their president Barrack Obama about it. This created a lot of excitement and discussion in the classroom. Most all of the students indicated they would blog again and felt that blogging was a useful technological learning tool for sharing information.

This unit of work has exceeded the goals that were set out in the unit plan because all children engaged in the activity, and most all of the children regularly made an effort to; share in the ideas of others, valuing their contributions and responding to their comments about the environmental practices within their school.

**Conclusion**

I believe this unit of work enhanced both my classroom writing and oral language programmes. It gave the New Zealand students an opportunity to look at sustainable practices in schools from an international perspective. It provided an opportunity for the students to develop an understanding that the meanings and the way language is used in another culture can have some variances. This meant the blogging caused the students to be more reflective about asking and answering questions, to check for understanding and to enjoy the differences.