

Teaching 2.0 students using flatclassrooms

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/11/2008 8:59:01 PM

The student in the image asked me a question on the content of my lesson. However, she was not really my student. She was one of Chad Ball's students from New Brunswick in Canada and was part of a 100 strong class of Canadian students seated in their school lecture theatre, listening to me, speak about Australia, our culture, our way of life, our school and our farm. Pre-existing impressions of Australia were of us living in the outback and 'croykie' (crikey!), the crocodile hunter - our own Steve Irwin!

Mr Ball's students (14 year olds) are currently studying the topic of Oceania and are about to study Australia and NZ. Through my association with Jeff Whipple needing to return his favour of teaching my classes how to use a wiki and walking us through the 100tales project, by using skype and bridgit conferencing tools with the IWB, I was asked to tell Chad's students about Australia.

Chad had already set up a wiki for this topic and associated resources, so I was able to check this out before I took my 60 minute session. Students had replied to his bulletin board message on facebook, with questions they would like me to answer, so this was a valuable resource, giving me direction and prior knowledge. Understandably I was nervous and I later found out that Chad was nervous, but Jeff was there helping things along.

As there were up to 117 students from four classes, and other interested teachers in the theatre, I needed to keep their attention throughout. So I pondered over how to share photographs, as our school does not have a license for bridgit conferencing or illuminate or other tools. The quickest, simplest way, I decided was to set up a series of powerpoint presentations, convert them into slideshare and embed the slideshares into a wiki. Both countries accessed the wiki and as I said, 'click' or 'next', the students in Canada could see what I was referring to. In the image below you can see me using skype and Jeff displaying my wiki images (map of Australia) as I talked about it.

At times, I stopped to see if there were any questions and as there often were, I answered them and then proceeded. Students thought I had a funny accent, but theirs was rather different as well!!! I got mixed up with a question on "do we have beach shacks" then realised they said beach sharks!! Skype dropped out only once, and although my voice broke up at times, it worked remarkably well. The best part for me were the student evaluations and feedback re the class. How often do we, as teachers get such comments? Read Jeff's post for his version.

This is powerful learning and indicates the way that education can go. Textbooks will surely be used less and 'real' teachers from other countries and cultures teach our students about their areas using the wonderful world of web2.0

The first comment is from Chad Ball, their teacher.. Thousands of kilometers, 29 hours on a jet, or a few clicks of a mouse... we got to Australia this morning!

Thank you so much to Anne Mirtschin for an incredible tour of your part of Australia. Here are a few comments from my students.

- It was incredible,
- Its just so different from what is normal here. I probably would of never found any of that out if it wasn't for that presentation!
- That was soo cool! it was real awesome of the cool things i (and everyone) learned, I think i'm gonna do some research on more later...
- i really liked the fact that we were actually talking to her. not just in email. i thought all the pictures she showed were pretty sweet. also, i thought it was cool how we are used to different surroundings and habits.. yes, we dont say put your bookbag in the boot... i still find it awesome, though. i love australia so much! (not to mention thier accents!)
- I thought that was so cool, for anyone who missed that, I wish that they could have seen it!
- that was an EXCELENT, presentation. I LOVED IT. it was very interesting, and i think that getting to learn chinese is a very diffrent thing then what we learn here.
- THANK-YOU SO MUCH. :
- i dont really understand why they learn chinese... i dont really think that makes much sense

- Hi Mrs. Mirtshin
We were just watching you video and we wanted to know what bubble taps were.
- I really enjoyed seeing and listening to her.
I learned a lot of new things
- i loved her accent. when she said RIGHT-O ! hahaha !
- Hello again..
- I jsut wanted to say thanks again for taking the time to talk to us abotu Australia. It was really interesting and i learned a lot!
- it was swet
her accent was cool, but the conection kept breaking up but it was till sweet
- thanks allot for sharing some of the intersting facts about were your from and for taking the time out of your day!!
- I thought that it was great! And I love her accent. Plus, we got out of Math!!! It was really fun and I hope we can do it again.
- Mrs.Mirtschin,

Thank you very much for taking your time to teach us about where you live. I thought i was really interesting to learn about how different it is from here. thanks again !!

- Awesome presentation and pics. I'm gonna look up some more stuff on Australia... We should have a field trip there lol it would be fun...
- Yeah we thoguht the presentation was cool, and the web-cam thing was a really good idea. We both learned lot's of new things about Austrailia.
- thank you Mrs. Mirtschin, that was really cool... and i hope that someday i will come to australia, and now that i know a little bit about australia i will be able to understand things there even more.

- for anyone who missed it, it was a very awsome presentation.
- you should have been there.
- Thank you for teachiing me lots of things that i didnt know about Australia.
- P.S. I LOVE YOUR ACCENT!
- Thank-you for teaching us stuff... PS. Kangaroos are cute!
- Thank you for teaching me so much about your home, Australia. I learned a lot of really cool stuff, and I hope that some day I can go there to explore for myself.
- jsut wanted to say thanks for talking with us today and taking the time to teach us more about australia.

hope you have a grate day MATE, or nigt i dont know

- I that it was to cool that we got to talk to you this morning
Thank you lots
- hey mrs. mirtschin
thanks for teaching us about australia it was fun thanks again
- Thank you Mrs. Mirtschin for teaching us alot about Australia and what it is like to go to school there and about the farms and the sheep and everything. I enjoyed listening to you talk and asking you questions thank you for your knowledge that you shared with us.
- thank you i learned stuff that i didnt know about befor
- i really liked the presentation you gave!!! thanks bunches
- good stuff, cool last name
- That was really interesting! It was pretty wicked awesome in my words. -lh
- i thought that was a really interesting presentation. i can't believe you can EAT kangaroo! gross.— emma.
- P.S- her accent is AWESOME.
- Lucas: thanks for doing your awesome presentation! ps: i would like to try kangaroo
- Stephen: thank you for taking your time to do that it was great!
- Thank you very much for your time. I really enjoyed listening to your presentation. I thought it was very interesting and very well done !
- Thank you so much for staying up late to talk to us. I thought it was really fun and nice of you. Hopefully we can do it again sometime!
- Thank-you so much for staying up late and talking to us about Australia.! I learnt a lot just from that presentation. :) . It made me want to take a trip to Australia! That would be pretty sweet !. Anyway, THANKS SO MUCHHH! :)
- Thank you for the grate moring here.
- Thank you for geting ous out of the frst 2 class of the day!
- Thank you!
- I learned a bit from the presentation this mornig!
- I wish I could visit Australia sometime!
- Hmmm..... now to get my swollen head out of the cyber clouds and resume normal teaching!!! Please comment back if you read this post, as we would love some opinions or feedback!

What grade 6 students want on their class blog

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/25/2008 11:23:35 PM

Teachers should never underestimate the ability of students. As all grade 6 students now have individual blogs, the 'baby steps' of introducing blogging are now showing fruit, with the grade 6 teacher Marg Murnane

commencing a personal blog . With Heather Blakey's help , a techno6 class blog is now 'work in progress'. The class was asked what they would like to see on this blog and their comments can be found in the word cloud above. Aren't they great ideas?

The next step will be to determine which ideas should be categorised

posts, pages, text widgets etc. Watch their class blog to see how it develops over the next few months.

Nb I tried to embed a text cloud into the wordpress post, but had great difficulty. So, I created my own, by inserting individual text boxes into MS Powerpoint, saving it as a jpg and then inserting the image into the post.

10 reasons for commenting on blogs

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/3/2008 3:45:09 AM

"A comment a day encourages bloggers to have their say." (A quote from one of my twitter friends.)

When using online tools, the power of leaving comments when viewing other people's work should not be overlooked. Comments can be made on blogs, podcasts at www.podomatic.com, teacher tube etc and even be added to some vovis and voicethreads.

Comments on student blogs are one of the highest motivational factors and drivers that I have witnessed in my classroom over many, many years of teaching!

I can still remember the excitement, when our classroom blog received its first comment. Someone was actually reading our post on the www.backyard.globalstudent.org.au It read:-

Your "backyard" is beautiful! Thank you for sharing it with the world. (Lori, California)

...and the comment was from overseas!! How absolutely fabulous!! That was it, the posts went up regularly - all students wanted comments, so they knew they had to complete the work, write interestingly and well, add images, if possible, for added impact and there was a need to

proofread.

Here are more reasons on why comment!! (taken primarily from an educational angle)

- There is an authentic audience that is now tangible. Another memory from early this year, was hearing a simultaneous whoop of delight from my year 9/10 IT elective students when they discovered people were commenting on their posts. Now, that is a sound, we rarely hear in our traditional classrooms!!

- Comments can be so highly motivating. There is an authentic audience and real people are reading (it is not just for an assessing classroom teacher).

- They can lead to conversations. Students from the USA made comments on older student blogs asking for feedback on what USA was mentioned. That made my students sit down and think!!

- Connections are made by replying to the email address that must be shown when commenting.

- Establishes social networks. The most experienced bloggers maintain good social networks as they email replies to all comments and conversations extending the post to even greater depth and levels.

- Teaches students and adults cybersafety techniques. Comments on most blogs require approval before they are published online, so students

are taught responsibility for diagnosing and filtering appropriate material.

- It may activate student-led learning. Comments on some student posts have aroused the curiosity of students - the location of the person making the comment, the need to research further a comment on Mt Helen's volcanic eruption, a question that requires higher order thinking skills etc

- An increase in personal confidence. People care about the writer and the content of the post. Further dots are appearing on their cluster maps etc. Students want to share their work and here is proof that they are - whether it be another teacher, parent friend or global visitor.

- Encourages regular posts - which helps increase reading and writing skills

- May drive the blogger to read the commentator's blogs and learn about other cultures, ideals, thoughts, geographical areas and learning activities taking place in other schools around the globe.

Next time, you read a post, even if it is just a short one liner, please make a comment and it will make a big difference to the writer- whether they be experienced or inexperienced.

Getting Staff on to web2.0

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/22/2008 8:13:27 PM

To encourage staff to use web2.0, we have started with what they may find useful, personally

What we have done:

- all have opened up a <http://del.icio.us> account (social bookmarking)
- pd sessions on resizing and manipulating images, using www.irfanview.com
- using photostory for digital storytelling

What we are doing:-

- 10 minute spot pd at each full staff meeting eg using skype, ms communicator, ipod demos, using clickview videos, getting the best out of search engines etc

- 'walk in, walk out Wednesdays' A suggestion by Jess McCulloch, based on an idea of @kimcofino whereby we make ourselves available in the computer lab for any staff to come in, work on their needs and ask us for help where required. Starts tonight, so I shall update this after the session.

Reflections on first session:
Constraints: Notice of session was only given in the morning, so due to other commitments and Jess' absence in Aararat, we had two staff.

However, this worked well. Advice was required on

- email downloads, signatures on forwarded emails,
- grabbing music from a usb and placing into suitable format on the network for Powerpoint use and
- location of files for student retrieval

The three of us worked together on using our newly established intranet with MS Sharepoint and on further required developments on the site. Despite the low attendance, it was a very worthwhile endeavour and if you checkout Sue Waters comments below, we shall see about providing some food for participants in future. Hmmm.....now whose budget should that come out of.....?

Getting staff on board web2.0 cont.....

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/24/2008 4:26:36 AM

Jess McCulloch and I have 20 days teacher professional leave in 2008, to look at 'laying the eplanks for a virtual classroom. Today, we used one of those days for reflection, planning and building up our resources. Now that blogging has become established amongst our students, we looked at getting staff on board web2.0 Lengthy discussion followed. Should we aim for 100%, 75%, 50% staff usage of web2.0?

Constraints

- At a recent teaching and learning meeting, it was recognised that some staff may see no need, nor have time to learn and introduce it into their classroom curriculum. This applies especially at senior levels, where there is a set curriculum to adhere to, SATs to complete and exams to be sat.

- Some staff including the physical education staff saw no real need. (We, of course, could argue against this, but there is no point at this stage.)

- It is too hard and time consuming to take on board

- They feel they have 'missed their opportunity' to come on board, and will never catch up now.

- Don't know where to start and then, what to do with the tools.

Current uses of ICT and Web2.0

- All our teaching staff have registered for a <http://del.icio.us>

social bookmarking account as they can see a 'need' to have such an account. So, we do have 100% use of web2.0 for this use, (if it is used at all).

- most communications are by email and all our reports are completed on a computer, using the software markbooks.

- An intranet has just been set up by our technician using MS Sharepoint

- All teaching staff, but one retired part-timer, have a personal laptop, leased through the department.

- 80% of our primary school staff, are blogging and have got involved in global projects.

- 50% of our total 34-12 staff have created blogs with most posting now.

- A grade 6 classroom blog has been set up

- One aide has commenced blogging
- Other office staff, science lab

assistants, library assistants and other SSO staff are showing interest and have asked for after school pd sessions etc

- It has taken 'baby' steps to gradually get staff on board. The air of excitement and notable keenness of students using blogging has created an interest in other staff, and allowed them to see a need, niche and use for blogging.

What we need to do:

- Continue with 10 minute spot pd's at staff meetings

- 'Walk in walk out' Wednesdays (offer our time for 1 hour after school, for staff to come in with any questions, concerns, needs or just to have time to work on computers and leave at any time)

- Approach staff on an individual basis to seek out their needs, inhibitions and potential uses.

- Direct staff to possible social networks who may be able to help them use these tools

- Encourage participation in global projects.

- Set up resources, links and tutorials including podcasts on our school intranet

In memory of my dearly loved mother

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/2/2008 2:38:31 AM

Hilda Dora Juers (nee Schurmann)
13/11/1930 to 29/03/2008

These posts have been about my journey with my students. However, every journey starts somewhere and mine started many years ago. It was Mum who helped mould me to make such a journey. I would like to tell you about her.

My much loved Mum died on Saturday, March 29th, but we did not realise she had passed away until the morning of Sunday, 30th March, when a doctor's certificate was issued proclaiming that she was deceased. That now is her official date of death.

My Mum taught me a desire to become a life long learner. She loved and nurtured us as children, giving us confidence, a sense of adventure, a love of travel and showed us how to encourage and support others, showing only kindness. Despite suffering type one diabetes for 52 years, she rarely complained, always showed true grit and determination overcoming many of the afflictions

that ailed her over her lifetime.

She had many interests and loved listening to sporting events broadcasts, keeping up to date with current affairs and was always watchful of the weather forecasts, due to her great love of gardening. Her life was a busy one and Dora was rarely idle - only hospital stays made her so. She was a fun loving person, who enjoyed socializing, making friends and entertaining. Her family was of prime importance to her and she loved the family social gatherings, get togethers and outings. Many happy times were spent travelling together, both domestically and overseas.

Diabetes led Mum to follow a rigorous diet, regimented daily routines and the suffering of many and varied health problems, various major operations and numerous hospital stays. Dora was determined to live life to the fullest and this has made her an inspiration to us all. She survived my Dad's death for two years. Yet in that time she suffered serious, life threatening illnesses. Again Mum overcame these to enjoy a healthier end to her life. She died

peacefully in her home, aged 77 years.

My daughter has written this tribute to her precious Nanna.

My Nanna

My nanna was always caring,

My nanna was always kind.

Nannas like my nanna are very hard to find.

My nanna's always helping,

She'd do anything you asked,

She'd always think of others, only putting her own self last.

My nanna is my idol,

I told her of this too,

"When I'm to be a nanna one day, I want to be a nanna just like you".

Nanna you meant so much to me,

Its hard to have you part,

You're now with Pappa in heaven, but you'll always be in my heart.

Her funeral took place today, on April 2nd, 2008, at 10:30am at the Lutheran Church in Warrnambool. Her coffin flowers are pictured below. The red roses symbolised the absence of her two grandsons, in London, who were unable to make it home for the funeral.

Preps, web2.0 and ICT

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/24/2008 4:11:13 AM

In our goal, with the support of our school leadership and teaching and learning team, to 'lay the eplanks for a virtual classroom', we are looking at the following elements of the conceptual age:-

- connectivity
- creativity
- communicate

After speaking with Trish Butters, our current prep teacher, Trish was of the opinion (and I tend to agree with her), that there is little use for web2.0 in her classroom. It is felt that preps (5 year olds) need to connect with each other and their teacher in this important formative year. Connections outside this realm would have no meaning or impact.

Despite, many of them going to Warrnambool to shop (a 30 minute trip), they still have no concept of it

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Flashmeeting with OZ/NZ teachers

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/21/2008 4:36:51 AM

Interested teachers from Australia and NZ who follow twitter, met for the second time last Sun evening. The first meeting was very informal and last night's session was hosted by Simon Brown or @skytrystjoy. @sujokat started us all off and it is a great way to make connections and share and discuss various issues. First JoeDale from the Isle of Wight talked us through the sections of flashmeeting and then we tended to divert and discuss student blogs.

Evaluation of flashmeeting as an online conference tool.

- It allows all members in the meeting to have video projection, which illuminate, skype and other tools do not. Skype only works between two parties.

- There is an interactive whiteboard and it allows sharing of applications.

- My age is showing as I fear I am going deaf and blind. The tabs were

really small and extremely difficult to read. @gkat talked us through the method of increasing the size of the chat text but we still had to find the tab that allowed us to text chat.

- My video camera did not work, despite logging in and out twice. It works on skype and msn so I will have to test it before the next session.

- However, the quality of the video and sound was good, although personal settings on microphones need to be adjusted as we nearly 'jumped' out of our seats at times when someone else started talking. Some were too soft.

- can interrupt the broadcaster, but that is considered rude unless some emergency develops. Otherwise you wait in a queue to have your turn to speak.

However, with consistent use, further advantages of using this software will be evident and despite all the learners in the room, we all managed to communicate.

Do students feel safe blogging?

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/19/2008 7:06:25 PM

When I was recently asked to write an article on safety, one of the questions was whether students felt safe using the web2.0 tools. So, I asked Grade 6 students a question on whether they felt safe blogging. (Students have had a class blog for 8 months and individual blogs for 2

months)

Here are some of their replies:-

- I am very careful, and I make sure I never write anything too personal about me. And instead of using pictures of our selves we use vokis, weemees, and avatars. I feel safe because we are always reminded to not use our last names and we can talk to all our friends and our teachers. Also because our teachers regularly check all of our blogs and

leave comments.

- Because we don't use photos and teachers remind you not to do some stuff.

- Noone has said anything bad about my blog.

- We don't put our personal details and photos

- Nobody really annoys us and if they do we can delete them.

- I do because we dont write anything to personal about our selfs

Parent Partnerships - on auto pilot

By *murcha* (On an e-journey with generation Y)

Submitted at 4/16/2008 4:11:41 AM

Our school day with students finished after period 4, lunchtime. All students went home on the bus and after lunch, parents were invited to come in to our school and speak with teachers. This can be a challenging and testing time and often the parents you would really like to speak to, do not make the effort to come.

Most of the afternoon, I was kept reasonably busy with parents, but later in the afternoon and after tea, I had students 'dragging' their parents in to the computer room, where I was stationed, to show off their blogs. Some of these younger students are 'bits of strugglers' but parents sat with them, were rather amazed at the blogs and then proceeded to help them add content, correct spelling and suggest improvements. I had to do nothing

but listen and 'smile'. Parent partnerships are such a necessity and here it was happening before my eyes with absolutely no organization on my part. I even had to ask one lot to leave as we were locking up the school - interview times had finished!!!

I have a very large group of grades 4/5 combined, with mixed ability levels. I have a couple of students who every lesson, cant even logon. So, we gradually get started but sometimes dont complete a lot. Now, I think I will open up that class periodically (or all the time) to parents who wish to come in, sit with their child and work through blogging with them and perhaps 'adopt' some other children as well.

Parents were shown how to add comments, so it is hoped that those who have the internet at home will do so.

and we dont use pictures we use vokis weemees and avatars.

- I feel safe as I have not given out heaps of information about where I live.

- I feel safe because I haven't used any of my information, last name or pictures .

- Because i haven't given heaps of info about where i live. I use Avatars instead of photos

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being Warrnambool. If a map of the world was shown to them, it would have no meaning either. Even basic ICT and computer skill use is lacking. Some students still have had no exposure to a mouse or computers, and need to learn computer basics. So communication skills will be built upon within the classroom only.

This leaves creativity and my suggestion to Trish, that she might set

up a class blog, where a collection of their activities, writings, art work could be stored online etc. Some interest was shown in this, but time is an important element. It would basically cover communication as well.

Any comments on this issue would be welcomed!!