

Reading blogs is not, to me using Google Reader. For me, I instantly signed up for so many blogs that I was overwhelmed and allowed the posts to accumulate to a point where I would not be able to keep up. But after a little searching, and trying to keep up with my overwhelming Google Reader, I did find 3 blogs that I really liked. To help me remember to read these 3 blogs better I started using iGoogle for my homepage and instead of letting these 3 blogs feed into my growing Google Reader bank, I put them at the top of my homepage. . . right up front. Every time I launched the Internet there were my 3 main blogs. I would get excited when a new post would occur. Finally I had the courage to start commenting on these blogs.

Commenting is not, to me, anything as big as writing a letter to the editor or a response to an article in a magazine that was published last month. For those types of comments are sent off with a slight possibility of being published. Blogging and commenting is living in the now – what you think and feel at that moment of reflection. It is

that “aha” moment you want to share with the author – that you got his or her point - - or express how he or she has inspired you to use what they have written into your life or classroom. Or maybe you knew about it already and can give the author a new idea, perspective, or help him/her with something that was causing him/her a problem. Or maybe it’s like the comment that I made.... a total disagreement to what the author wrote. With this new easy to write on web, you are given the chance to add your feedback, to begin a conversation or continue one. It’s also great chance to read what or how others react to the author’s original posts.

So let me now show you how I manage this component of my own PLN. As I mentioned earlier I use iGoogle, it is free, you can set it up to have the look you like, you create the perfect homepage for yourself. What would you like the Internet to look like when you first dive in to start surfing? I am not going to spend time on all the perks

that having an iGoogle account gives you, but I will say that it is very simple and to put other features besides the blogs you follow on it is simply by clicking on the option “add to Google Homepage.”

When you find a blog that you like you click on a little icon thing called an RSS feed to send it to your reader. Huh? Think about the RSS fee as a magazine subscription. You want to get Martha Stewarts Living magazine sent to your house = you just fill out a form, promise to pay, and BOOM! It arrives in your mailbox. RSS feed is the same concept.

You find at the end of the page’s URL a star – click on it and choose to follow this website. It will then ask, “Do you want to add it to your iGoogle Reader or iGoogle Homepage. If this is a blog that you really like and feel that you can grow and interact on – add it to your homepage. I am very picky though on the one I want to see each time I start up my Internet. Make it a promise, as I did to myself that these

are the blogs that I will keep up with. The Reader is for the other blogs – the ones you like and will flip through and read. But the ones on your homepage are the ones that you feel you can grow with. It is easy to remove if you decide at any time that you want it off or sent to your reader.

Nings are formed on different interest groups. There are Ning groups on cooking, exercise, parenting, photography, education, and much more. I am going to share one Ning today called Classroom 2.0, but also talk about a new Ning that's developed from this one called The Future of Education. The Classroom 2.0 Ning is an online conference you can imagine, a meeting place for people to learn more about Web 2.0 tools or the Read Write Web. In this site there are many, many different areas that you can learn and grow. First of all they give you a place to blog – if you choose to blog here your audience would be

these other educators ` so its focus would be what's going on at your school, in your classroom; maybe encompassing a new Web tool.

You would have an audience of educators interested in Web tools that would see your blog and may likely respond to a post vs. starting one on like Blogger or Wordpress.

Another feature you have to help you develop professionally is by joining groups and following its discussions or participating in forum discussions. I view a forum and groups like a class at a conference.

People enter with similar interests, partner up to learn more. They talk about what they know, share resources, ideas, etc. You don't have to put your own information or ideas down ~ you could just follow what the others are saying!

A discussion is about the same but it starts off with someone asking a question or looking for advice on what tool to use or purchase. The

most awesome part of the NING though is the main page because here you can see the latest activity – what the hot topic is ~ like scanning the conference’s flyer on what presentations are being given. Only you decide is it a three day conference ~ one that you spend more time looking at the site when others add their blurbs (which are nicely sent to you in an alert email that you can set in your preferences.) Or is the conference a 30-minute break out session that may spark an idea for you to go and try.

In Classroom 2.0 they host live, online sessions that you can attend (usually around 1 hour long), but if you can’t make it they record and archive for later viewing. Over my spring break I watched 2 of these sessions: one on Twitter, and one on Nings.

If you do decide to dive into the world of Nings let me show you where to begin.

(Talk about the hotdog stand restaurant that twitters its location and has crowds of people flock to it.)

But Twitter can go much farther than just being a professional development tool because you chose whom you want to hear from. The true explanation of this tool is called micro –blogging. People post/blog in 140 characters what’s going on. They send news info, websites, photos, videos from YouTube, status updates on their child’s kidney transplant (which is a real Twitter I got to read 1st over Christmas break when the father, who is an educator, posted the awesome news that his little one had received a donor. Then through out the weeks updates on surgery and recovery were sent out.) I have been introduced to a web browser called Flock over my spring break

because I sent out or shared a post with a neat new tool add on you can install on your browser and a guy asked me if I used it with Flock. I hadn't heard of Flock before so I Googled it and now am trying it out.

This professional development tool did not occur over night. I have been using it for about a year (minus the two month summer vacation time). When I first signed up I was at a one-day conference. I was told to get an account and then I started to "follow" the conference presenters. Then I started following people that they followed. I was given a website where other teachers are listing their names, Twitter names, and what they teach ~ and I started following a lot of them! I have also used Mr. Tweet, which is some program that recommends people to follow based on what you tweet about. And I like to follow back the people who follow me ~ if their profile talks about education and it shows that they too are posting tweets.

There are programs that can run the Twitters to your computer without launching the Internet and going to Twitter.com. That was the first real step I took when I started better using Twitter. I just couldn't make myself go to Twitter.com and constantly retest the window. So I heard of the program Twhirl. It seemed a little tricky installing it – so if you try it and hit a snag try downloading it again. (Show Twhirl site)

Twhirl can constantly be running and when someone I follow “tweets” a notification appears on my screen. All the conversations are in one column.

My coworker and good friend didn't like how she had to scroll down to the bottom to see messages people had sent to her directly ~ and heard (from a Tweet) about Tweetdeck. She downloaded it and gave it a shot and then sent me a DM to get it too. This program give you your tweets in columns = Tweets – Direct Messages – Replies – and

any other column that you set up.

(Show my TweetDeck and send out, read, view few links & reply. *

Show 3educhat)