

1:1 Tip: Research shows that students collaborate more when they have their own computers. Consider how you can take advantage of this ability in your unit.



Activity 5: Considering Web-based Collaborative Learning

(15 minutes)

Several online tools can be used by teachers to support communication, encourage student collaboration, and organize Internet resources. You previously experienced two of these free tools—blogs and wikis. Review the benefits and drawbacks of each resource in the following table and then explore online collaborative Web sites. You use this information later in the module to consider how you can use these tools to support the learning objectives and student collaboration in your unit.

Note: All Web site referenced in this module are available for easy access in the "Module 3 Web Sites" file in the *Module 3, Web Sites* folder on the Curriculum Resource CD.

Blogs

Description	Short for weblogs, <i>blogs</i> are used to share information and opinions with readers and to solicit feedback and discussion. Blogs often take the form of a journal and are regularly updated with new entries.
Example Instructional Uses	Character journals, lists of research sources, reflections on learning, collecting responses to ideas, debating issues relevant to the subject area, and so forth.
Drawbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction is limited to written responses. Blogs often can be viewed by anyone with Internet access unless you make the blog entries private. Formatting, design options, and multimedia are often limited. Content usually must be edited online. People may respond to blog entries with inflammatory or inappropriate content.
 Blogging Sites	A list of Web sites where you can set up your own blog is available in the <i>Module 3, Activity 5</i> folder on the Curriculum Resource CD.
 More Information about Blogs	<p>Blogging: It's Elementary, My Dear Watson www.educationworld.com/a_tech/tech/tech217.shtml Presents an article about using blogs in elementary classrooms</p> <p>Blogging Basics: Creating Student Journals on the Web www.educationworld.com/a_tech/techtorial/techtorial037print.shtml Provides a quick introduction to getting your students to write their own blogs</p> <p>About Blogs www.budtheteacher.com/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page Uses a wiki format to offer resources for using blogs in the classroom</p>

Wikis

Description	<i>Wikis</i> are collaborative Web sites that can be set up to be edited by anyone or only designated users. The creator of a wiki can receive notice of all changes and can track and monitor the development of the site content.
Example Instructional Uses	Group writing, collaborative Web development, share research findings, project planning, information collection, and so forth.
Drawbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other authors could make unwanted changes to your work. ▪ Content must be edited online. ▪ People may contribute inflammatory or inappropriate content.
Wiki Sites	A list of Web sites where you can set up your own wiki is available in the <i>Module 3, Activity 5</i> folder on the Curriculum Resource CD.
More Information about Wikis	<p>For Teachers New to Wikis http://writingwiki.org/default.aspx/WritingWiki/For%20Teachers%20New%20to%20Wikis.html Presents an overview of wikis—what they are and how they can be used</p> <p>Using wiki in education www.scienceofspectroscopy.info/edit/index.php?title=Using_wiki_in_education Defines wikis and suggests ways students can use them</p>

Online Collaborative Web Sites

Using online collaborative Web sites, individuals can work together on documents, spreadsheets, and presentations they create online. They can also upload previously created files from their personal computers. Each online resource has different capabilities, such as the ability to:

- Access files from any Internet-connected computer
- Invite others to view or edit documents
- Allow multiple authors to edit and view a document at the same time
- Work on documents online or offline
- Compare two versions of the same document
- Identify authors' contributions in various iterations of the document
- Track previous versions of a document

(continued)

Wikis

Description	<i>Wikis</i> are collaborative Web sites that can be set up to be edited by anyone or only designated users. The creator of a wiki can receive notice of all changes and can track and monitor the development of the site content.
Example Instructional Uses	Group writing, collaborative Web development, share research findings, project planning, information collection, and so forth.
Drawbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other authors could make unwanted changes to your work. ▪ Content must be edited online. ▪ People may contribute inflammatory or inappropriate content.
Wiki Sites	A list of Web sites where you can set up your own wiki is available in the <i>Module 3, Activity 5</i> folder on the Curriculum Resource CD.
More Information about Wikis	<p>For Teachers New to Wikis http://writingwiki.org/default.aspx/WritingWiki/For%20Teachers%20New%20to%20Wikis.html Presents an overview of wikis—what they are and how they can be used</p> <p>Using wiki in education www.scienceofspectroscopy.info/edit/index.php?title=Using_wiki_in_education Defines wikis and suggests ways students can use them</p>

Online Collaborative Web Sites

Using online collaborative Web sites, individuals can work together on documents, spreadsheets, and presentations they create online. They can also upload previously created files from their personal computers. Each online resource has different capabilities, such as the ability to:

- Access files from any Internet-connected computer
- Invite others to view or edit documents
- Allow multiple authors to edit and view a document at the same time
- Work on documents online or offline
- Compare two versions of the same document
- Identify authors' contributions in various iterations of the document
- Track previous versions of a document

(continued)

Classroom Blog Ideas

You can combine some of these ideas into a single blog, or you can create a number of different blogs for different purposes.

Note – make sure you get permission from parents before sharing student work or photos online.

Teacher Blogs

- **Weekly Newsletter**
Instead of (or in addition to) sending home a paper newsletter, do it as a blog. Just let the parents know the URL and they can check it regularly.
- **Sharing Student Work**
Share student drawings, writing, voice recordings, and pictures of students in the classroom through a blog.
- **Spelling Lists**
Use a blog to post your spelling lists or vocabulary lists for the week.
- **Teaching Tips**
Create a blog to share teaching tips and ideas with other teachers.
- **A Blog of Widgets**
Create a blog to “house” a random name picker widget for each of your classes. (See page 56 for instructions.)
- **Resources for Parents**
Post lists of websites, books, TV shows, movies, hands-on manipulatives and other resources that would help to expand the learning beyond the classroom.
- **Feedback from Parents**
Post a question or prompt, and let parents add comments to your blog post. Or – embed a Google Form into your blog to gather information from parents. (See page 125 for instructions.)
- **Lesson Plans**
Post your lesson plans for the week in a blog for administrators and/or parents to view.
- **Absent Student Info**
Have a student who is absent? Post the assignments for the day, post a PowerPoint presentation or two, or even USTREAM a lesson.



Teacher/Student Blogs

These blogs are set up by the teacher, so they do not require student Google accounts.

- **Daily Journal**
Post a prompt or question each day to your blog. Students can add a comment to answer the question or to respond to the prompt.
- **Reading Response Journal**
Post questions for a book or story you are reading as a class and let students add comments to respond.
- **Online Debate**
Ask a challenging question or post a provocative prompt and then let students add comments with their arguments or justifications.
- **Gathering Data**
Use a Google Form within your blog to gather data from students during or after a science experiment. Then go to the spreadsheet to analyze the data.
- **Online Voting**
Embed a Google Form or a Poll Daddy questionnaire into your blog to vote for class president, to decide where to go on a field trip, or to choose the next book to read as a class.
- **Photo Essays**
Create a "happiness" blog. Provide the "mail-to" email address to post to the blog. (See page 44 for instructions.)
Students can use their cell phone or a digital camera to take a photo of something that represents happiness to them. They will email their photo (along with a description) to the blog.

This idea can be used with a variety of different concepts: hope, prejudice, generosity, selfishness, selflessness, freedom, etc.

Younger students could post pictures of: something green; something that contains a circle or triangle; something healthy to eat; something with four legs; etc.

