BOGANTWEET

WILLIAM J. BOGAN COMPUTER TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

Homework on Twitter

In the previous Week No. 15 BoganTweet we explored the practice of assigning Twitter-Based homework. Mrs. Robinson-Davis was kind enough to share an assignment she wrote and facilitated with her English IV students on the novel Persepolis.

As a teacher, you want to know what the virtue is of a particular instructional tool, especially if something is novel to you and your students.

In using a digital platform, such as Twitter, you are able to project all your students' work for the class to see, discuss and evaluate. Additionally, since Twitter is a social media platform, users can connect with each other. Not only can students see each other's work, they can also comment on it, post links to cite it, and gain more meaningful take-aways from it. All these things lead to greater student gains.

There are sites that exist in support of Twitter. One such site is storify.com. If you are using Twitter heavily in your class for homework, discussions and other work, you should take some time to check out Storify. This website allows you make a *story* out of the tweets that you and your students post. You can export the story you've created as a PDF file and use it as a review guide or provide it to students who were unable to participate in the discussion first hand.

The birth of a hashtag

The past few days have been wicked cold. It's a cold that has not been seen in 17 years.

As a native Minn-EE-sotan I was thinking, "Psh! Sub-zero? I've got this!" I stepped outside with a smile, turned about-face and went right back inside!

While inside I found myself with about 72 hours of downtime so I did what most digital natives do. I got onto social media to see what people were saying about the cold.

After a few minutes on Twitter I discovered a new hashtag - #Chiberia - born just a few hours before the Polar Vortex arrived at our door step. This hashtag is a mélange of '*Chicago*' and '*Siberia*' - no doubt a play on the frigid perception that so many people have of Siberia.

This latest play on the name '*Chicago*' joins the anthology of hashtags and nick names that have have been used to describe the state of things in Chicago. Most notably among our students is #Chiraq - the combination of '*Chicago*' and '*Iraq*'. *Chiraq* is a commentary on the violence that is all too prevalent in the lives of many of our students.

If you've not yet checked out some of the posts on Twitter or Instagram containing the hashtag #Chiberia, you're missing out! The photos are beautiful! In particular, I recommend you read through the Tweets posted by Chicago RedEye (@RedEyeChicago).

@njcampbell1

![REACH Students - Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago Students]

#DanielsonFramework Tip of The Week - 3a: Communicating With Students

To earn *distinguished* in 3a, the teacher, in part, "...clearly communicates standards-based learning objectives... ...directions and procedures are clearly explained... ...are student-led... ...spoken and written language is clear, correct and builds on students' language development and understanding of content. Vocabulary is appropriate for the students' age and interests, and teacher finds opportunities to extend students' vocabularies." Our students are (for the most part) *Digital Natives*. A teacher who leverages this in his or her communication with students is going to outpace their colleagues in 3a. A teacher could write out learning objectives, homework and other class information on the board, then take a picture of this information and post the pic on Twitter. Additionally, a teacher could type out this information on his or her phone (or use *voice-to-text* to speak it) then take a screen shot of the phone's display and post this screen shot on Twitter. We should always keep in mind that there are students whose knowledge of and skill set on Twitter outpaces ours. It would engender buy-in and student leadership to create the role of a *Class Tweeter* who would regularly post to the class's Twitter feed. Over time the *Class Tweeter*, the class as a whole and you will develop a meaningful flow on Twitter.

FOLLOW @

Who: Mrs. Williams

Subject: Social Science

Twitter: @RhondaRlHarrell

Mrs. Williams has been normalizing the use of social media in her classroom by posting extra credit work on social media. As an example, when Nelson Mandela passed she posted some links to FrontLine.com articles and then asking students to post responses to content-based questions about the news stories. For those students who are not on Twitter or who are not too familiar with social media, she offers these students the opportunity to complete the extra credit by doing it in a traditional fashion. A little under 50% of her students have taken advantage of the extra credit. And with each assignment the buy-in increases.
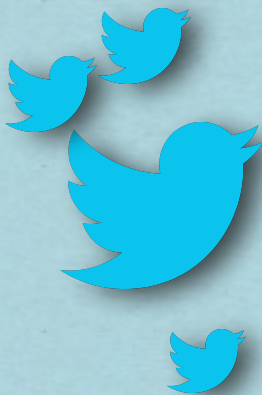
The #BackChannel

Twitter is one of a collection of useful sites that provide teachers and students with a free platform to connect, communicate and collaborate. One of these

TodaysMeet

sites is called TodaysMeet.com. TodaysMeet is a self-proclaimed *backchannel*.

What is the Backchannel? To paraphrase the folks at TodaysMeet.com, the 'backchannel' refers to everything going on in the classroom that isn't coming from the teacher. The backchannel is where people ask each other questions, pass notes, get distracted, and (possibly) give you the most immediate feedback you'll ever get as a teacher.

In today's classroom the backchannel usually consists of a few students who are slyly texting each other comments about what you're saying or about what other classmates are doing while the lesson is under way. In this form, the backchannel is a zero-sum game for the teacher and the students; no inherent reflection, voice or knowledge is derived from this down low conversation.

How do I set up a healthy, equitable backchannel? setting up a backchannel on TodaysMeet.com will take you about 3 minutes. Explaining it to the class may take about 7-10 minutes the first couple times you use it. After that, your students (who are *Digital Natives*) will quickly adapt to the expectations surrounding the backchannel. At the start of the lesson, instruct students to not ask questions orally, but, instead, post them on the backchannel using their mobile digital devices. Also, instruct students to take time and read posts made on the backchannel, and, if they know the answer to a question, tell them they should post a reply. This leads to the creation of student-scaffolds-student support, a constructivist student-centered learning experience.

What are the benefits of a teacher-created backchannel?
- By you, the teacher, creating and curating a space, you're able to better control the non-sensical clowning that takes place in the classroom
- Backchannels give each and every student a space to speak. Traditional classroom discussions can't really involve the full class. A backchannel gives voice to everyone (#EquityInVoice)
- The backchannel helps maintain the integrity of your lesson's flow. Imagine a lesson where the class was not stopped every 3-5 minutes and due to questions that to you, the teacher, are completely unrelated to the actual learning taking place in the classroom (#SMILE :))

Go ahead and give the backchannel a try. Create the space through which your students' minds wander. They are going to wander; this is human nature.