


The background of the slide is a photograph of a classroom. At the top, a world map is mounted on a wall. Below the map is a green chalkboard. On the left side of the chalkboard, a wooden ruler is leaning against the wall. The text is overlaid on the chalkboard area.

Classroom Blogs: Reading Across the Curriculum

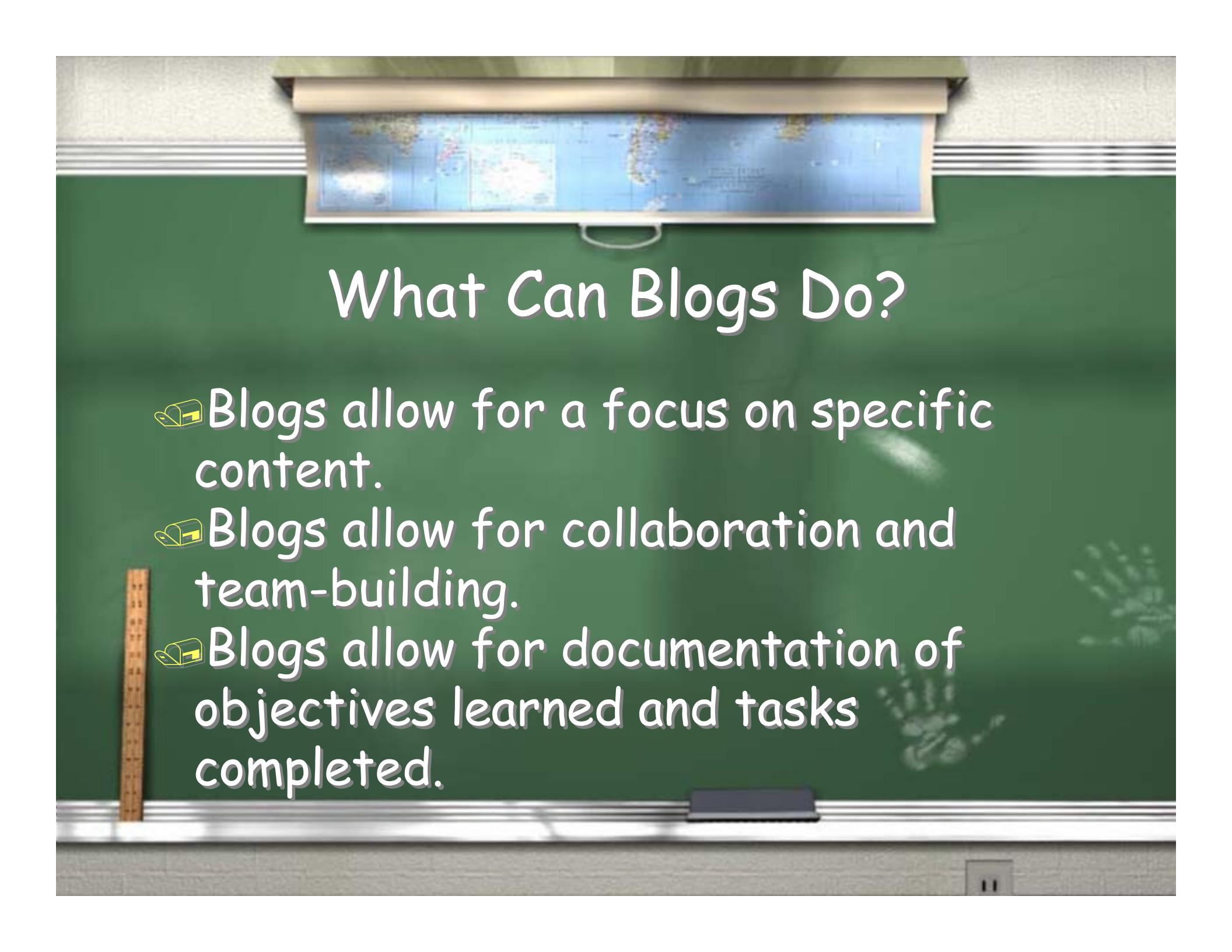
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What Are Blogs?

 Blogs, or online journals, are a fairly new medium that allows virtually anyone, anyplace, and at anytime the ability to publish their writing to the world, exchanging ideas, concepts, and thoughts online.

 In the education sphere, Blogs are used to "archive and publish student work, learn with far flung collaborators, and 'manage' the knowledge that members of the school community create." (Downes, 2004).

A classroom setting with a green chalkboard. At the top, a world map is mounted on the wall. On the left side of the chalkboard, a wooden ruler is placed vertically. The text is written in white on the chalkboard.


What Can Blogs Do?

-  Blogs allow for a focus on specific content.
-  Blogs allow for collaboration and team-building.
-  Blogs allow for documentation of objectives learned and tasks completed.



Where did Blogs Come From?

- 📖 Blog is a term derived from two words: Web Log.
- 📖 Blogs have been around since the early days of the internet.
- 📖 The term "blog" came into being in the mid 1990s when the ease of creating and maintaining personalized web content became more popular.



📖 On the whole, blogs were not part of mainstream internet usage and did not begin to gain popularity until roughly around 2000.

📖 It was not until the September 11th tragedy when hundreds of thousands of young people were needing an outlet for their thoughts did blogs reach their popularity of today.



Popular "Entertainment" Blog Sites

 MySpace

 Facebook

 Open Diary

 Live Journal



Popular "Educational" Blog Sites

 EduBlogs

 Blogger.com

 And, many more



Entertainment Vs. Education

- 📖 Most of these sites are not accessible from school domains.
- 📖 Security & content is not closely moderated.
- 📖 Bad publicity on these sites.
- 📖 Accessible through most school domains.
- 📖 Features & Content are closely monitored and regulated.
- 📖 Lacks some of the more robust and popular features students are interested in using.



A Third Option . . .

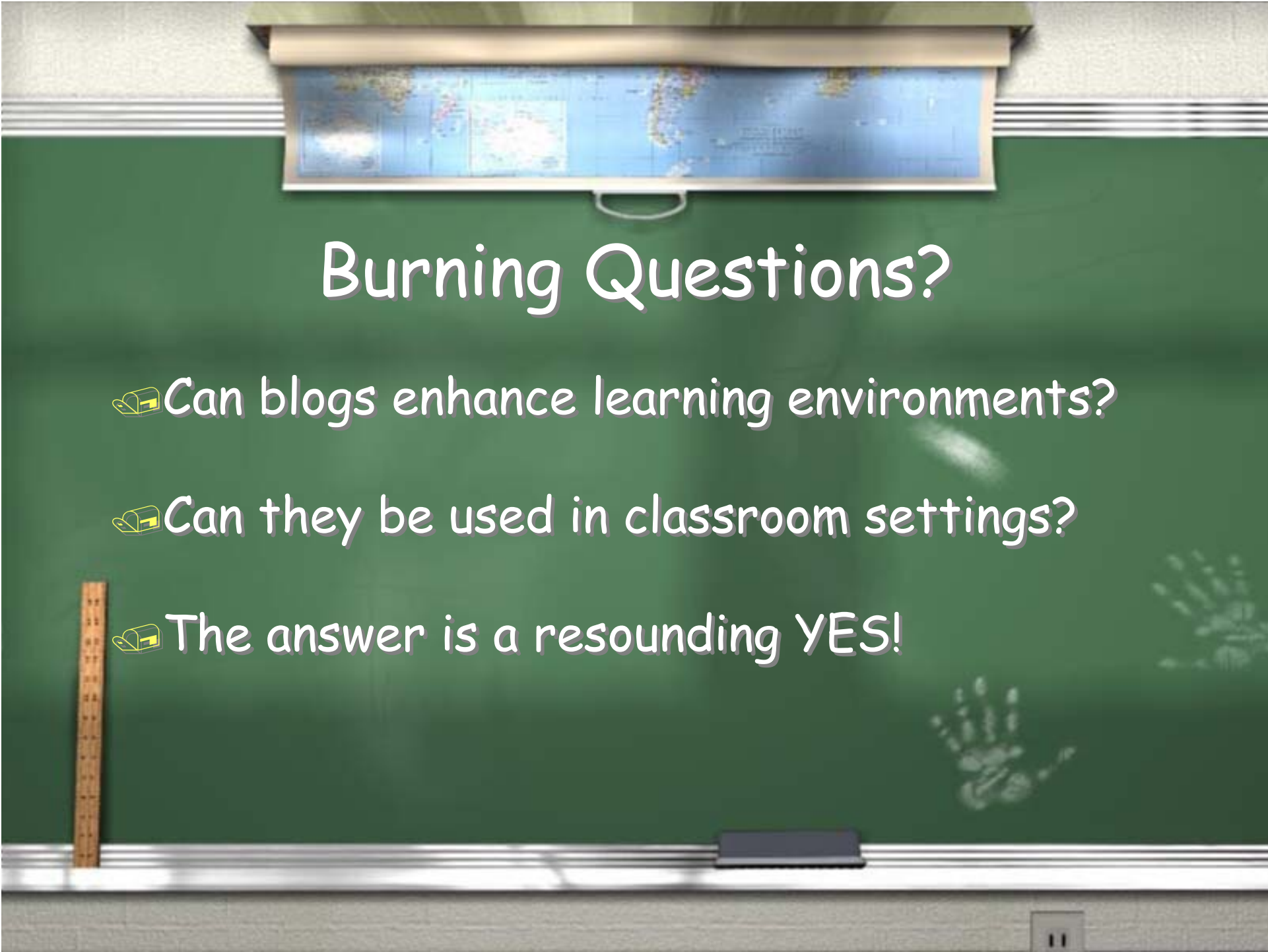
- 📖 There are software companies out there that sell packages to be installed on private networks that allow for Blogging.
- 📖 The problem? This can be a fairly expensive route to pursue and requires extensive setup support from your district's technology department.
- 📖 The positives? Security is much more strict, content can be scrutinized by whomever is designed an administrator, and the entire blog system is secure and private.



But Student's Really Aren't Interested In Blogs?

- ❏ FALSE! Roughly 87% of children, age 12 to 17, are using the internet.
- ❏ Over half of those 87% of teenagers create content for the internet (roughly 12 million youth in America).
- ❏ And of all the blogs that are currently available online, over half of them are published by young people.

❏ Source: Lenhart, Madden, and Rainie, 2006.

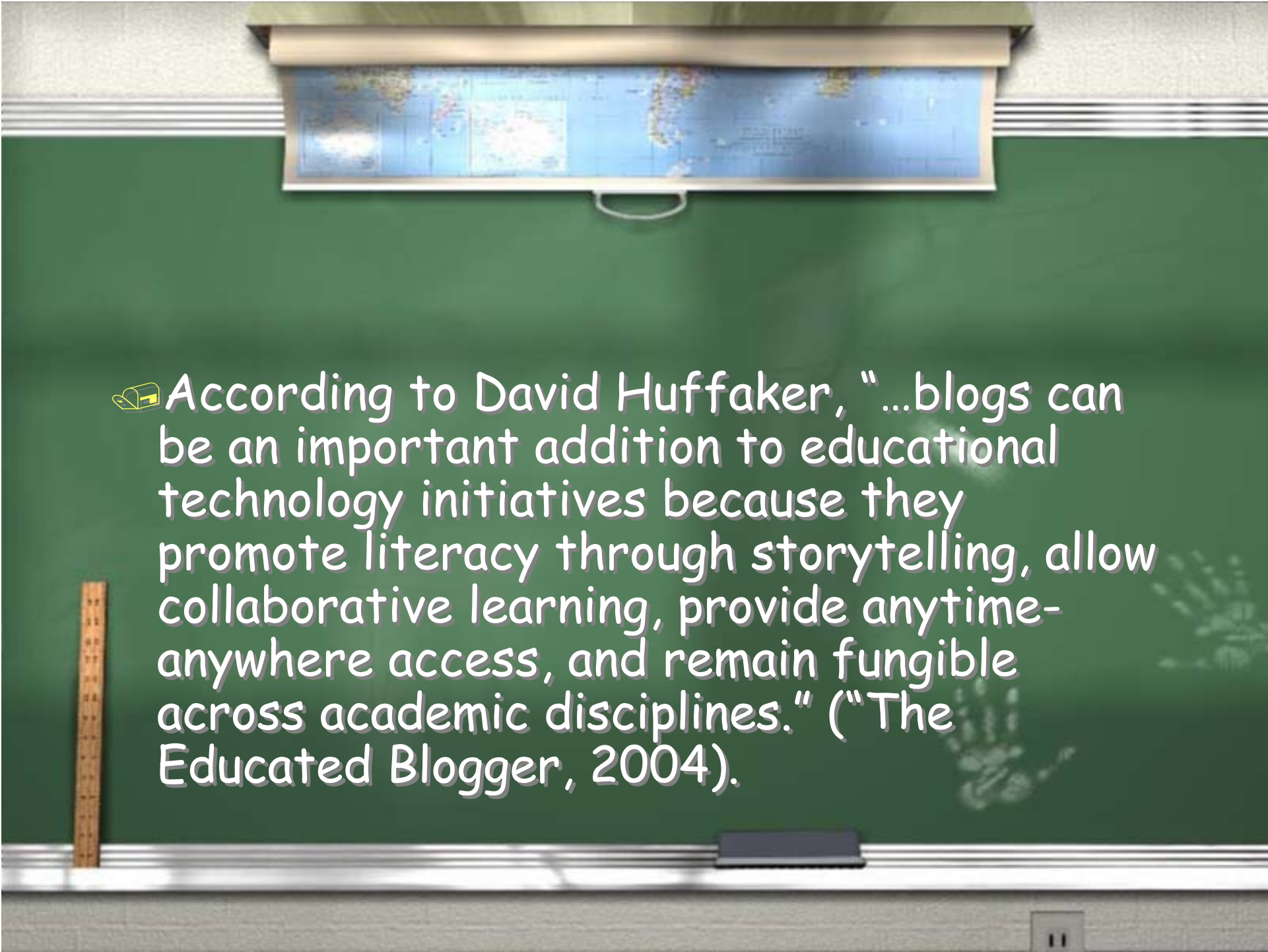


Burning Questions?

📖 Can blogs enhance learning environments?

📖 Can they be used in classroom settings?

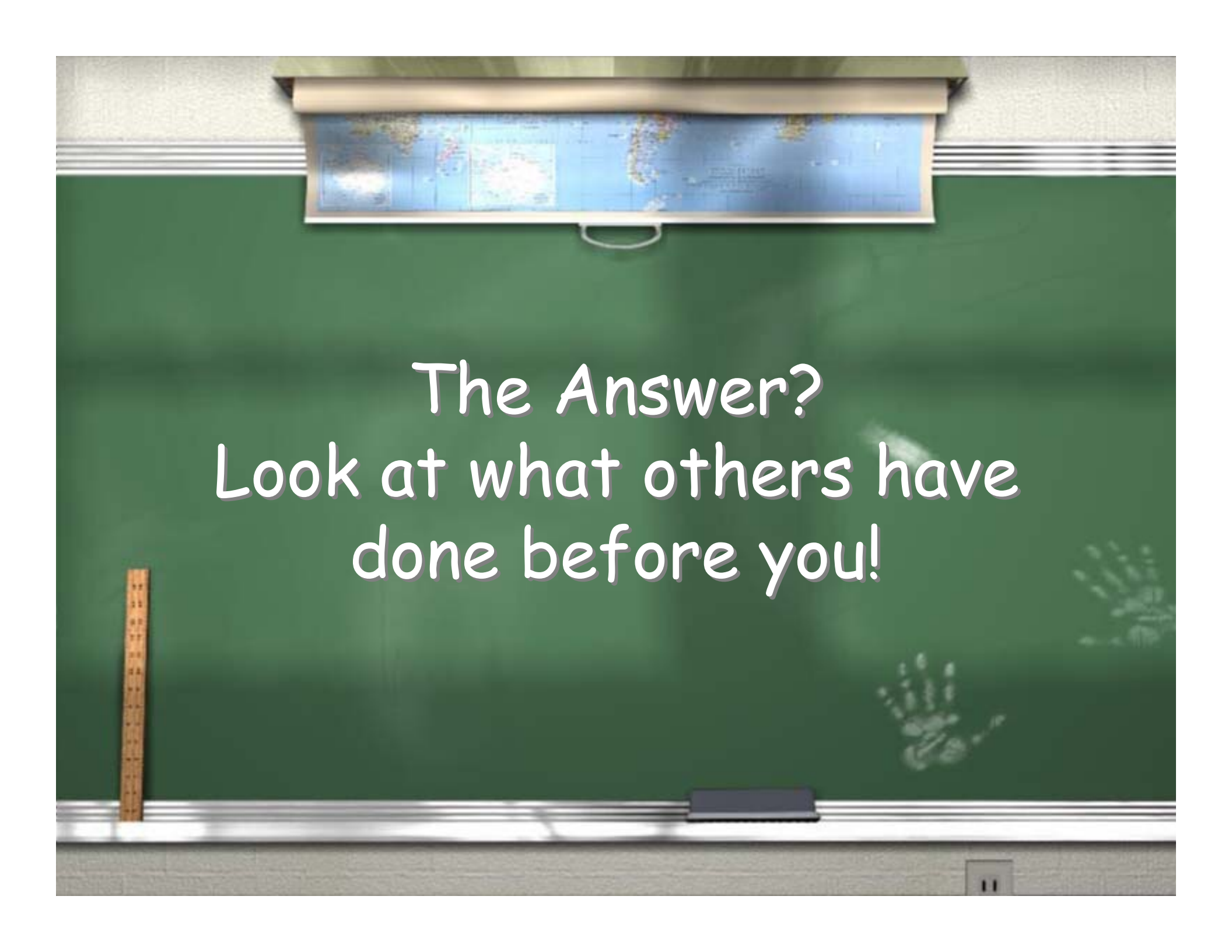
📖 The answer is a resounding YES!



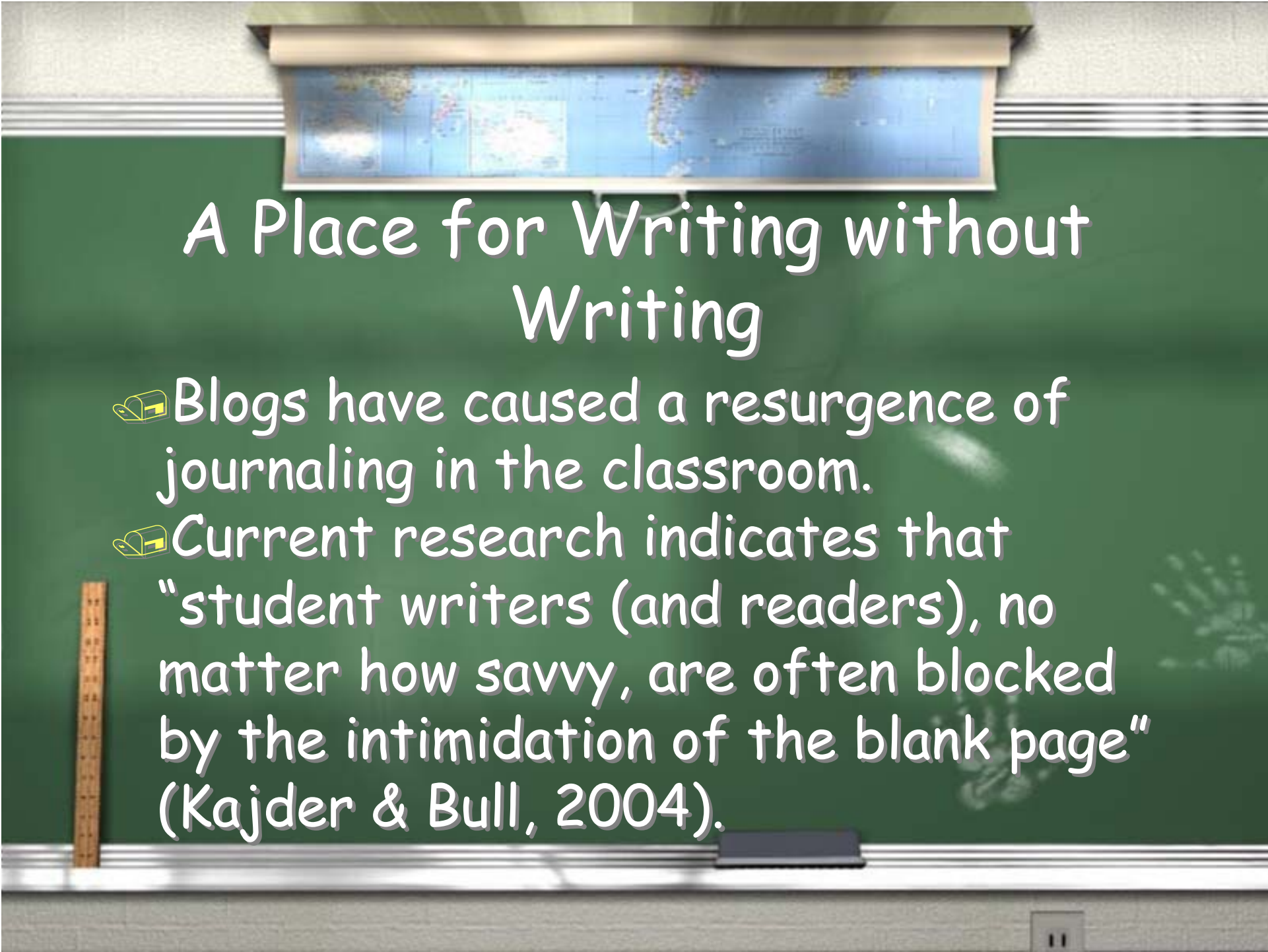
📖 According to David Huffaker, "...blogs can be an important addition to educational technology initiatives because they promote literacy through storytelling, allow collaborative learning, provide anytime-anywhere access, and remain fungible across academic disciplines." ("The Educated Blogger, 2004).





But How Can I Bring Blogs
Into The Classroom?

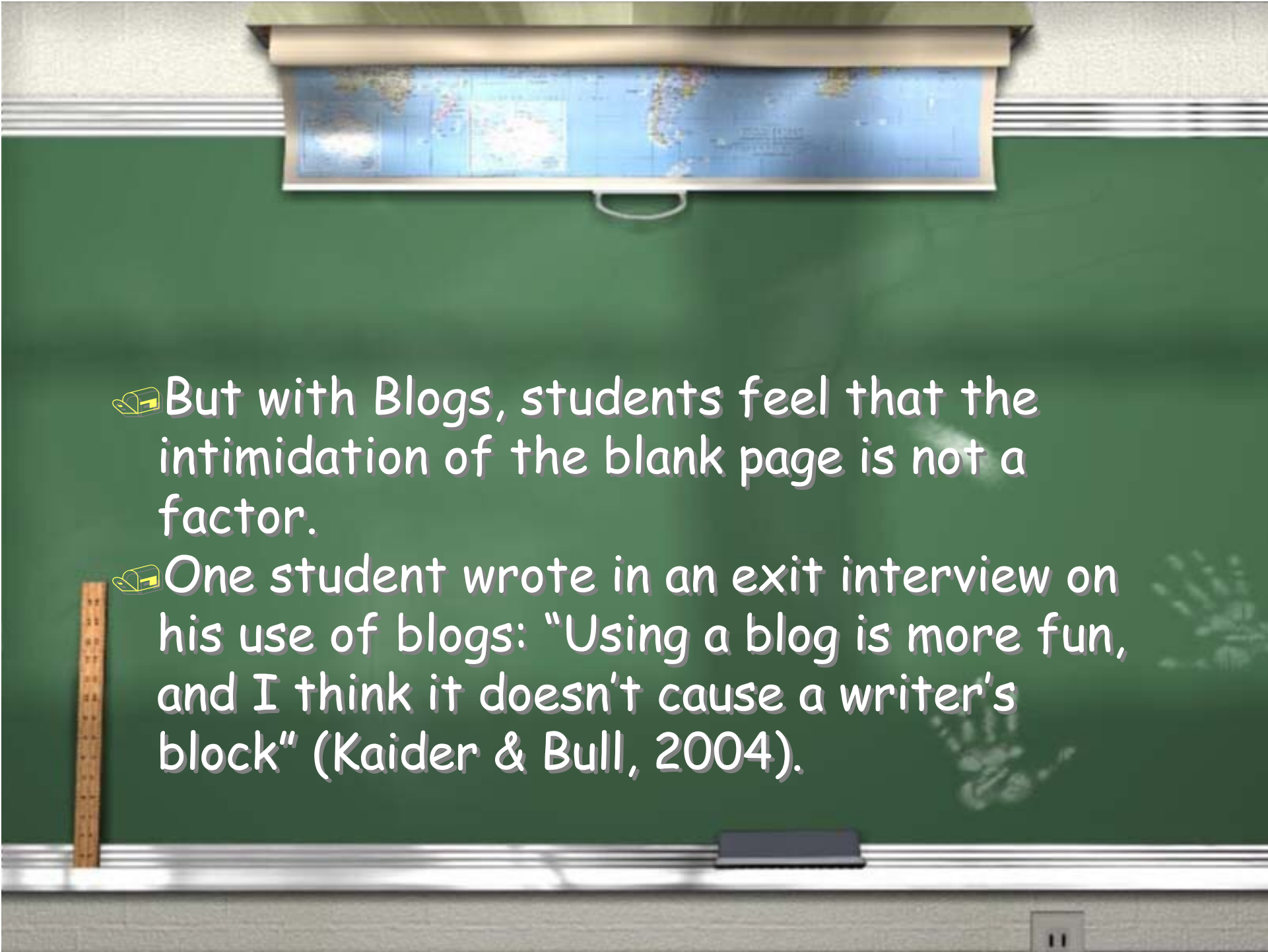


The Answer?
Look at what others have
done before you!



A Place for Writing without Writing

-  Blogs have caused a resurgence of journaling in the classroom.
-  Current research indicates that "student writers (and readers), no matter how savvy, are often blocked by the intimidation of the blank page" (Kajder & Bull, 2004).



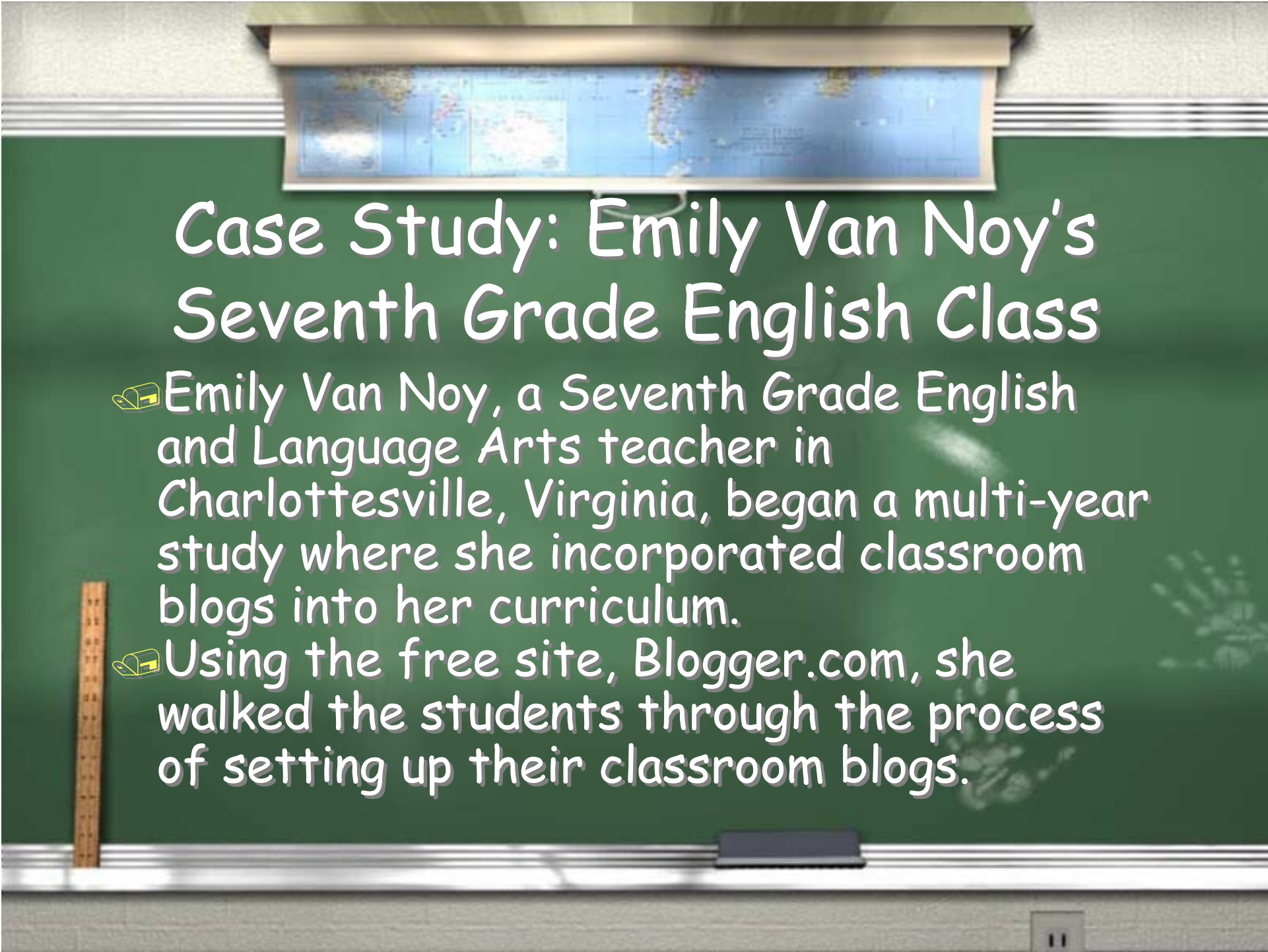
📖 But with Blogs, students feel that the intimidation of the blank page is not a factor.

📖 One student wrote in an exit interview on his use of blogs: "Using a blog is more fun, and I think it doesn't cause a writer's block" (Kaider & Bull, 2004).



Four Benefits of Student Blogs

- 📖 The use of blogs helps students become subject-matter experts.
- 📖 Increases student interest and ownership in learning.
- 📖 Blogging opens up assignments beyond the teacher-student relationship, allowing the world to grade students and provide encouragement and feedback on their writings.
- 📖 Blogging allows the opportunity for diverse perspectives, inside and outside the classroom.
 - 📖 "Content Delivery in the "Blogosphere"



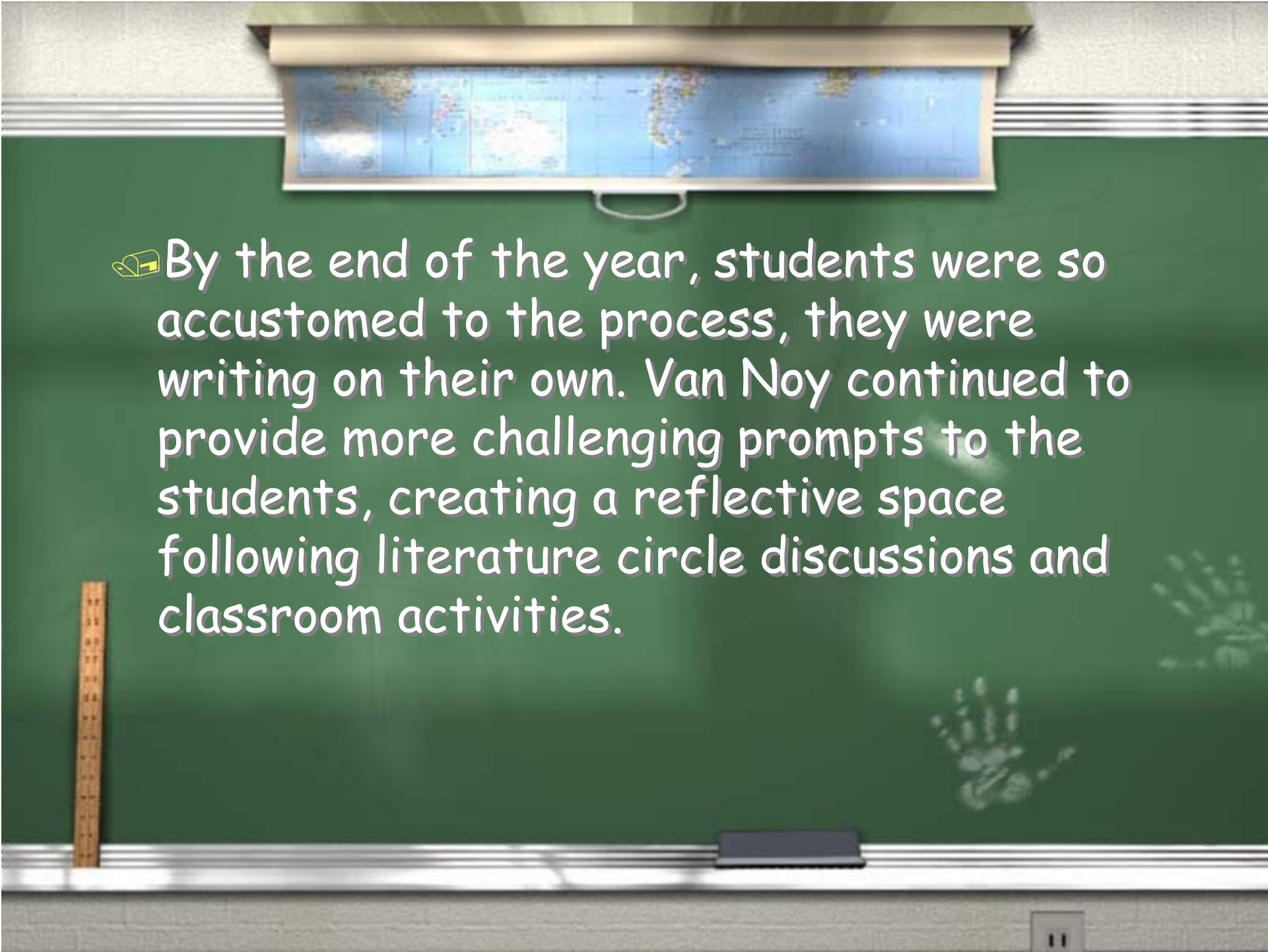
Case Study: Emily Van Noy's Seventh Grade English Class

- 📖 Emily Van Noy, a Seventh Grade English and Language Arts teacher in Charlottesville, Virginia, began a multi-year study where she incorporated classroom blogs into her curriculum.
- 📖 Using the free site, Blogger.com, she walked the students through the process of setting up their classroom blogs.



The Outcome?

- 📖 Early exercises were designed to encourage students to reflect on the work of an effective reader in their postings, allowing students to become accustomed to the software.
- 📖 Later prompts focused on the exploration of various themes and essential questions within the literature studied within the classroom.



📖 By the end of the year, students were so accustomed to the process, they were writing on their own. Van Noy continued to provide more challenging prompts to the students, creating a reflective space following literature circle discussions and classroom activities.



To Put This Into Context . . .

- 📖 Blogging is simply writing down what you think when you read other people's blogs.
- 📖 If teachers and students keep at it, others will start to read their work and write down their thoughts about the blog.
- 📖 This creates a continuous cycle of reading, analyzing, and writing.




Student Thoughts?

- 📖 Although apprehensive at first, the exit interviews showed an exciting trend in student involvement.
- 📖 The particular positive of the experience showed that students were writing more than in traditional journaling activities because of the speed and ease of typing and the particular emphasis on a regular (and fun) channel of communication with the teacher.

A classroom setting with a green chalkboard. At the top, a world map is mounted on the wall. On the left side of the chalkboard, a wooden ruler is leaning against it. The text is written in white with a drop shadow on the chalkboard surface.

Examples of Blogs In Practice


Elementary Focus

 J.H. House Elementary School in Conyers, Georgia, uses classroom blogs to encourage writing for third-grade students. The teachers use blogs to spotlight selected writings of the children and encourage other students to read the spotlighted works .



Examples of Blogs In Practice



Elementary Focus

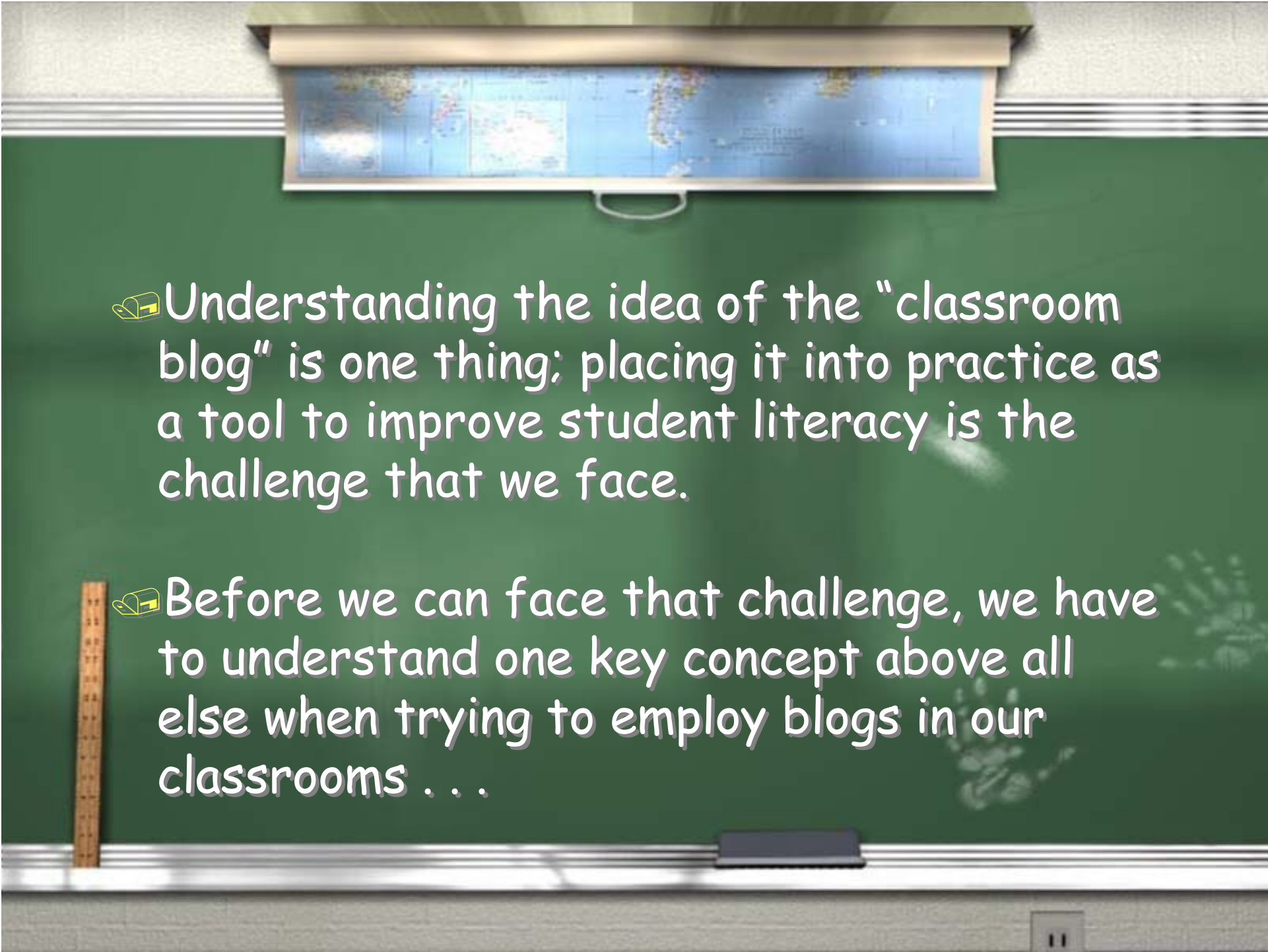
 Buckman Arts Magnet Elementary School in Portland, Oregon, uses blogs to create individual portals for each classroom. The blog links each teacher, showcasing photographs, student artwork, and classroom news.



More Examples


Secondary Focus

-  The Galileo Academy of Science and Technology sponsors a "Li-Blog-Ary" where research, reading, and writing is promoted using blogging software.
-  The staff of the "Li-Blog-Ary" believes blogs to be an effective tool in promoting literacy because of the ease of deployment and maintenance.



📖 Understanding the idea of the “classroom blog” is one thing; placing it into practice as a tool to improve student literacy is the challenge that we face.

📖 Before we can face that challenge, we have to understand one key concept above all else when trying to employ blogs in our classrooms . . .



Blogging is about, first,
reading.

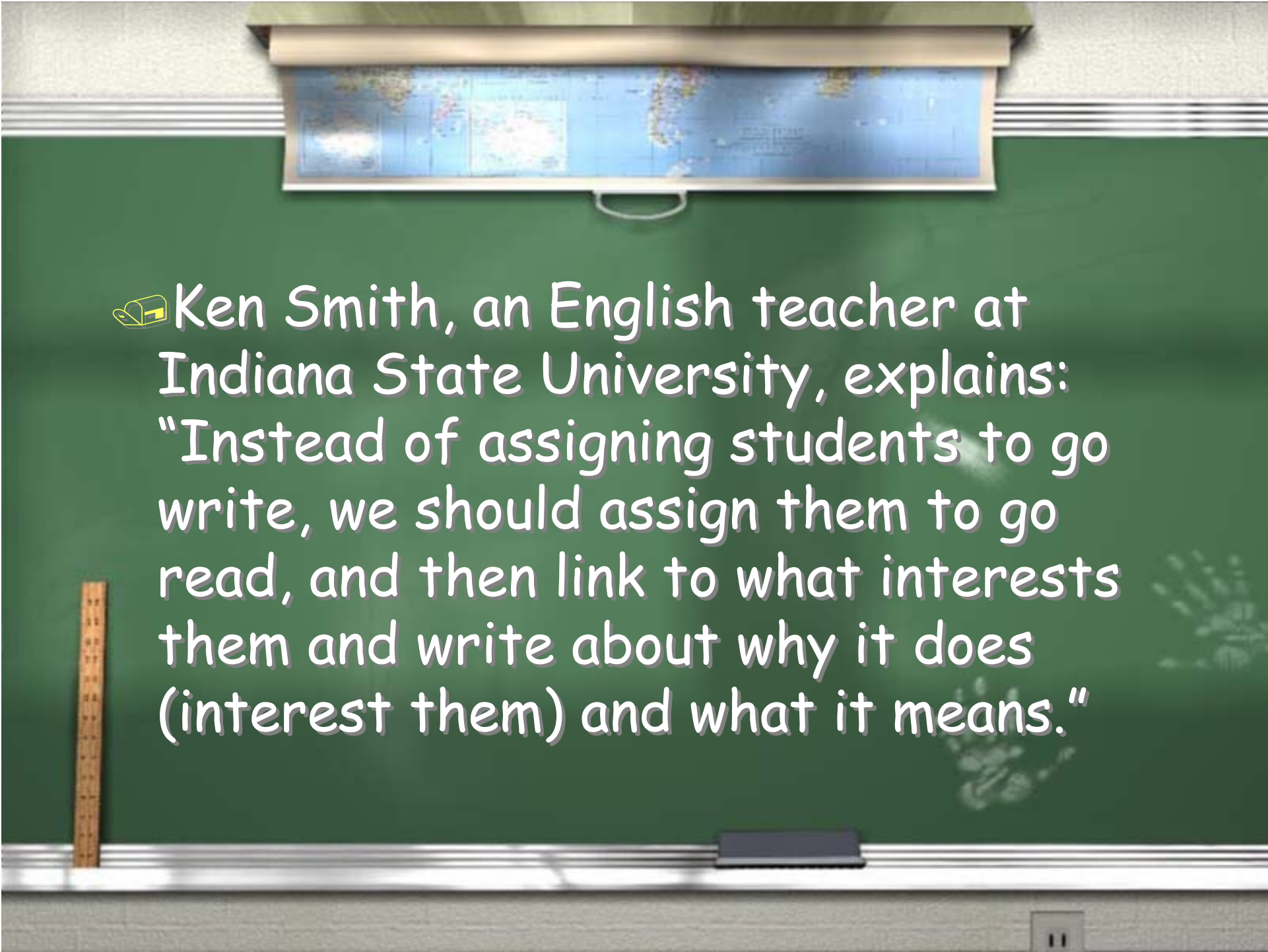
But more importantly, it
is about reading what is
of interest to you: your
culture, your community,
your ideas.



For blogging in education to be a success, this first must be embraced and encouraged.

📖 Our students must be engaged with the content and with the authors of what they have read in the classroom.


📖 Students must be encouraged to read, reflect, criticize, question, and react.

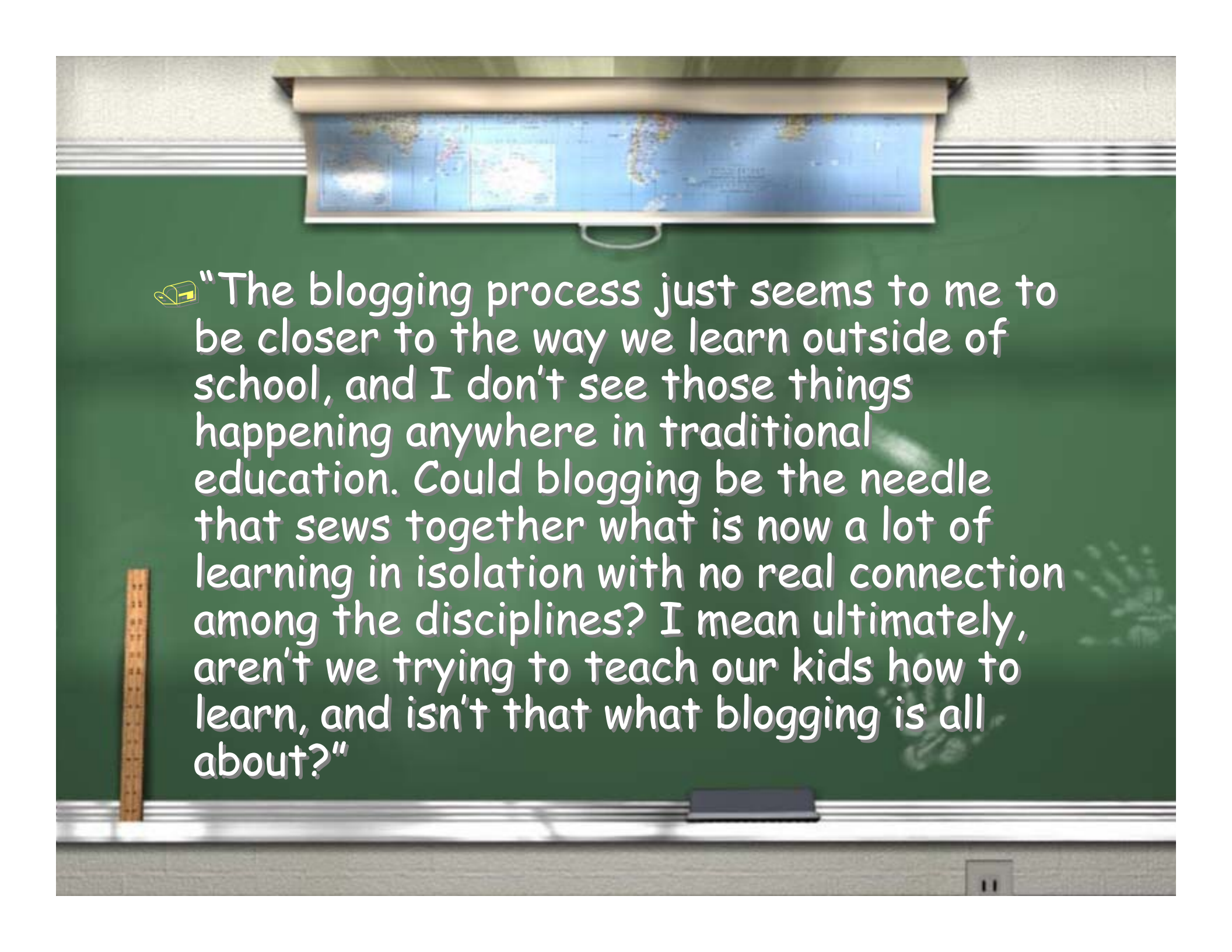


📖 Ken Smith, an English teacher at Indiana State University, explains: "Instead of assigning students to go write, we should assign them to go read, and then link to what interests them and write about why it does (interest them) and what it means."

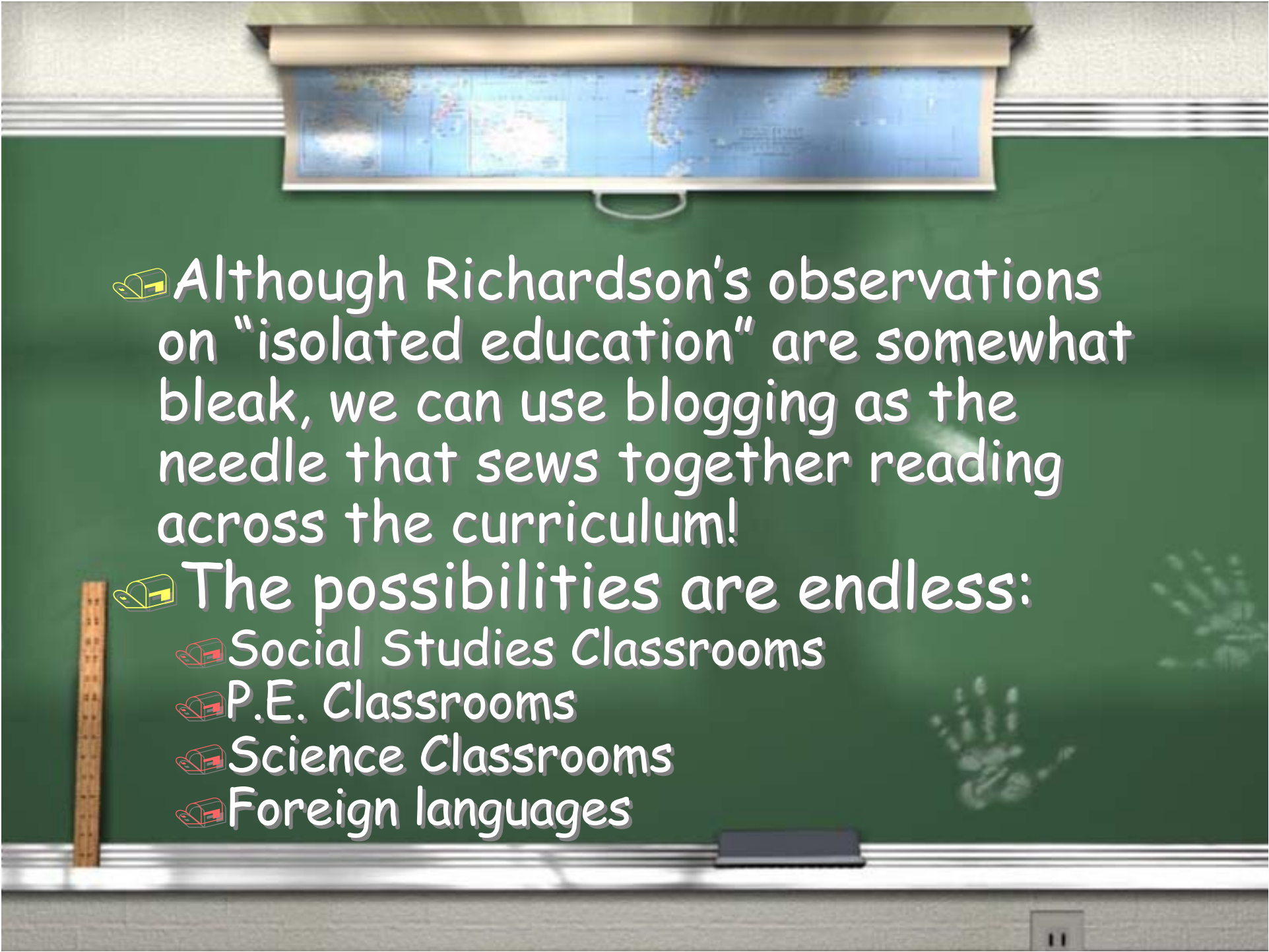


Making The Connection

 William Richardson, the Supervisor of Instructional Technology at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in New Jersey, poses an interesting thought:




📖 "The blogging process just seems to me to be closer to the way we learn outside of school, and I don't see those things happening anywhere in traditional education. Could blogging be the needle that sews together what is now a lot of learning in isolation with no real connection among the disciplines? I mean ultimately, aren't we trying to teach our kids how to learn, and isn't that what blogging is all about?"



Although Richardson's observations on "isolated education" are somewhat bleak, we can use blogging as the needle that sews together reading across the curriculum!

The possibilities are endless:

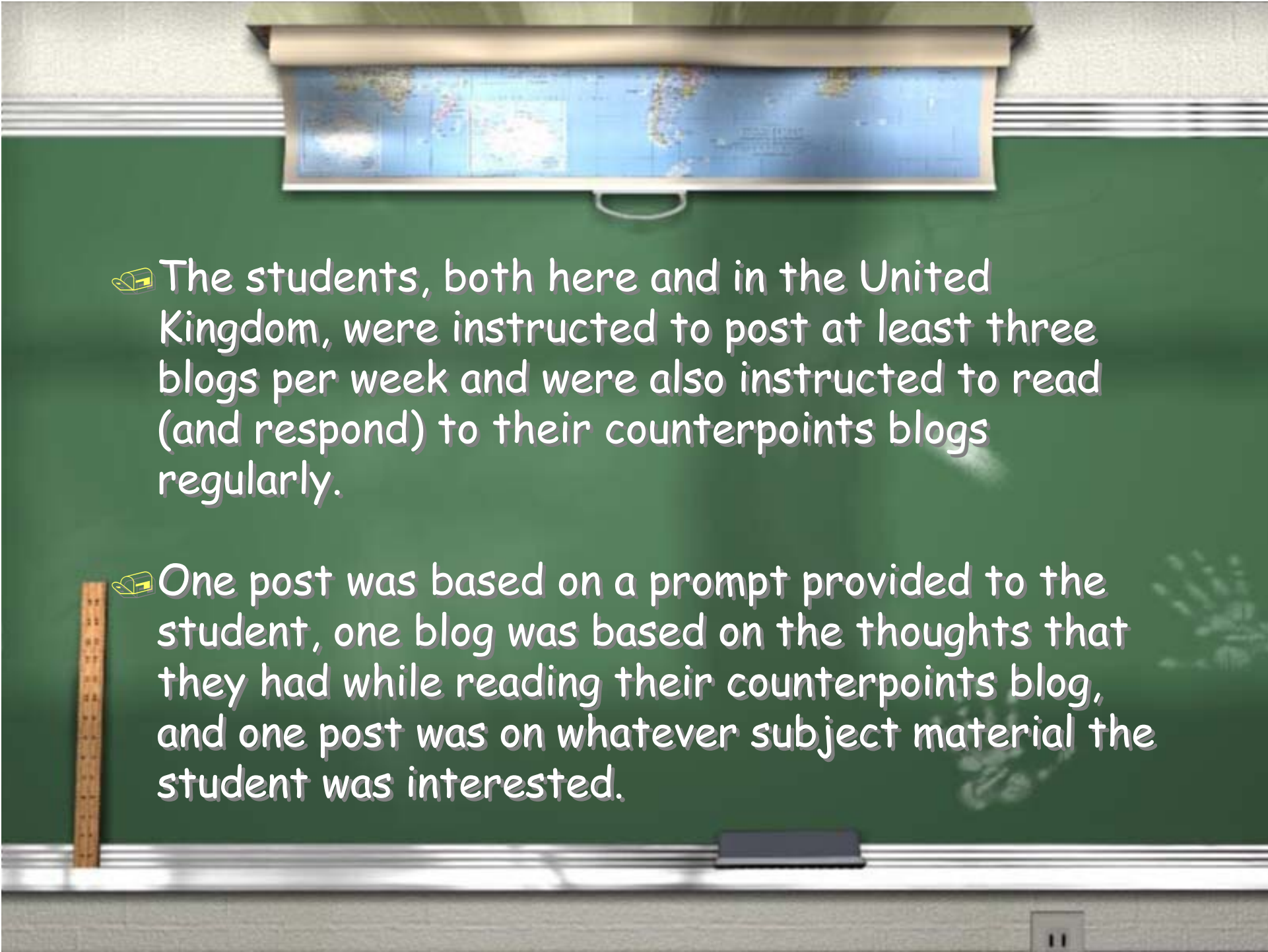
- Social Studies Classrooms
- P.E. Classrooms
- Science Classrooms
- Foreign languages



My Personal Experience

📖 As part of my graduate research, I worked with varying levels of public school children in grades 5, 9, 10, and 12 to setup and maintain a blogging relationship with students of similar age in the United Kingdom.

📖 Throughout this year long project, these students were continually blogging about their experiences at school, their assignments, and day-to-day thoughts.



📖 The students, both here and in the United Kingdom, were instructed to post at least three blogs per week and were also instructed to read (and respond) to their counterpoints blogs regularly.

📖 One post was based on a prompt provided to the student, one blog was based on the thoughts that they had while reading their counterpoints blog, and one post was on whatever subject material the student was interested.




Comparatively . . .

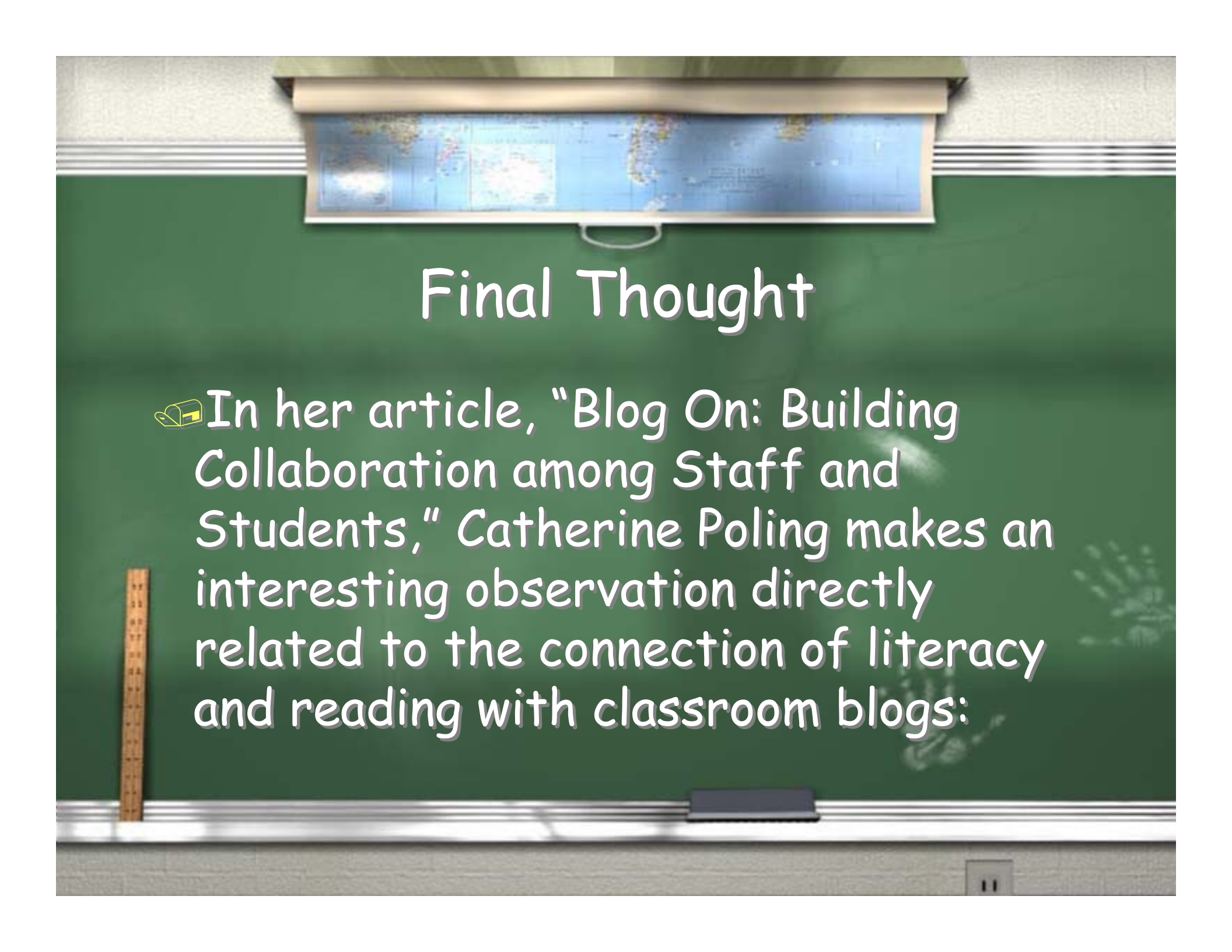
- 📖 A second group of students based solely in Florida, grades 5, 9, 10, and 12, were instructed to keep a journal.
- 📖 These students were asked to write three prompts per week: one based on a prompt provided to the student, one based on an assigned reading, and one post on whatever subject material the student was interested.




What Was Found?

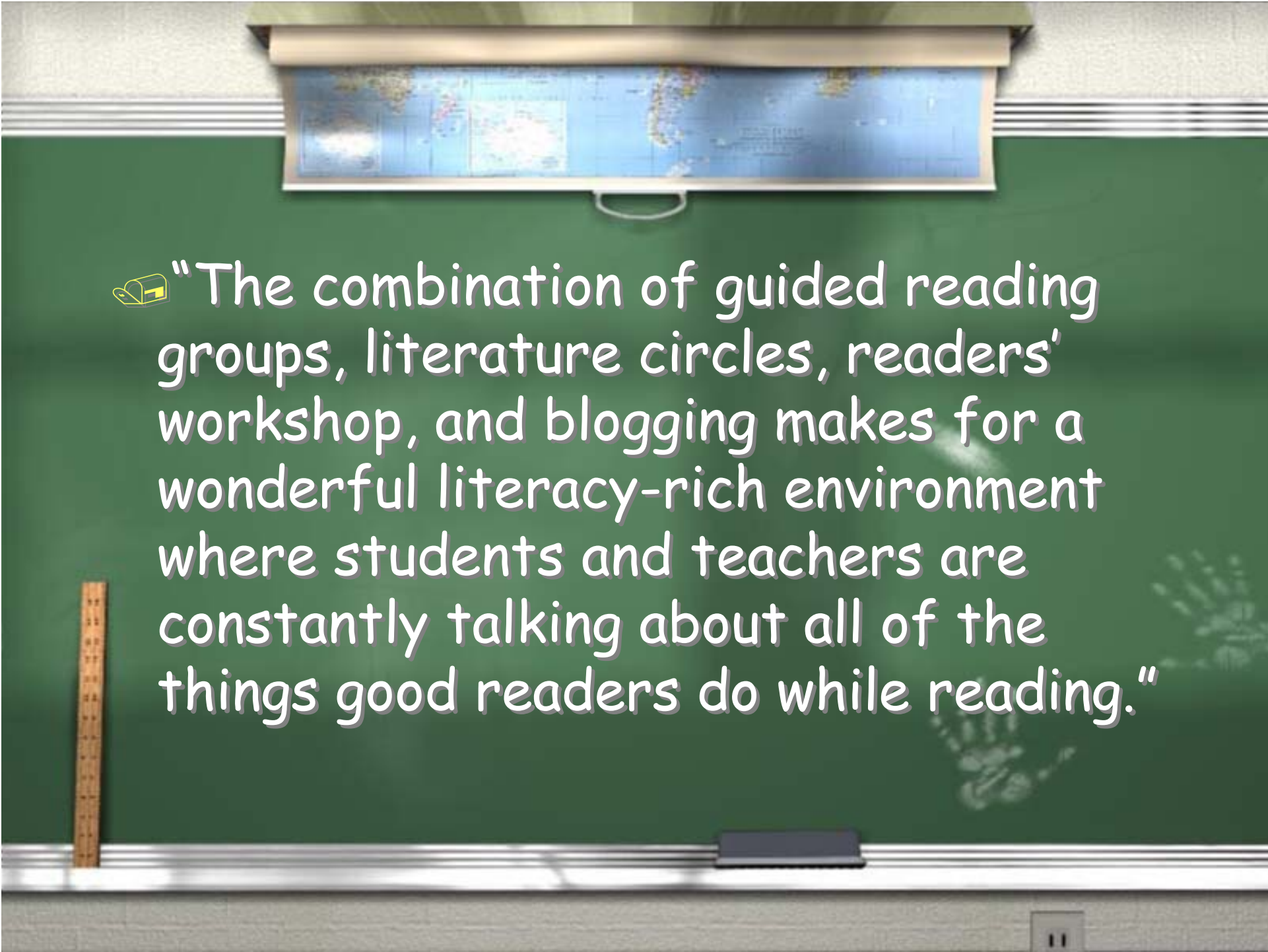
 The students that were in the blogging relationship were more interested, more excited, and more apt to read material more often than the traditional journal writers.

 The bloggers were also, of their own accord, reading and responding more often than the assigned minimum posts.



Final Thought

 In her article, "Blog On: Building Collaboration among Staff and Students," Catherine Poling makes an interesting observation directly related to the connection of literacy and reading with classroom blogs:



📖 "The combination of guided reading groups, literature circles, readers' workshop, and blogging makes for a wonderful literacy-rich environment where students and teachers are constantly talking about all of the things good readers do while reading."



Thank You!

 William Campbell

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