

Dublin Technology Center

Professional Development

What is Elgg?

Elgg is an open-source social networking software that allows for the creation of online social networking environments. Elgg was developed by Ben Werdmuller von Elgg and named for his hometown in Switzerland. It was originally developed as a social networking adjunct to Moodle but is now used as a stand-alone social networking program. Since Elgg is an open-source program it is free to use and there is an active community of developers producing greater functionality for the software.

Elgg has been used in Dublin City Schools since 2010, mostly in the elementary and middle schools. With the 2012 school year Elgg has been divided up into three Elgg servers, one each for elementary, middle and high.

Elgg provides the user (at this point there is no distinction between a student-user and a faculty user) with blogging, micro-blogging, file-storage, web pages, groups and more. For students to be on Elgg they need to have their parents sign the Web 2.0 permission form and turn in to a teacher. A TST will collect these and put them into a group that allows them access to Elgg.

Why Use Elgg?

As previously stated, Elgg provides users with blogging capabilities. These capabilities are not currently provided by any other Dublin technology. Because Elgg resides on DCS servers they are closed to the public so privacy and safety concerns are minimized. This gives students the ability to create content that is online but safe and secure.

In addition, Elgg provides students the ability to collaborate via blogging, pages, bookmarking and group discussions. This collaboration can take place within the same building or across the district.

Elgg has been used in *flipping* the classroom. According to Katy O'Neal, math teacher at Karrer Middle School and early Elgg user:

I used Elgg as a means to communicate with my students as and as a means for them to communicate with one another. The kids would go to my web page ... or research on their own the math concept to be covered in class the following day. The kids were to blog "one new thing they learned" and to read 2 other blogs. This made the lesson the next day so much easier for the students because they had previewed the info as well as read 2 blogs and reflected on what they knew. Having this exposure to the lesson ahead of time produced much more meaningful classroom discussion as well as they ability to dive deeper into the standards and materials being learned.

The students also used Elgg to ask each other questions about issues they were having with homework. This was neat to read as a teacher and see how they

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would collaborate to attack a problem. When needed, I would jump in and post something to lead them in the right direction towards the correct answer.

... No one ever just gave an answer... they would explain how they arrived at that answer. Again, a deeper level of thinking.