

Personal Learning Networks

Throughout history, humans have always created our own learning networks. When we needed to know how to do something, we sought out the expert in that field and they shared their knowledge. For example, hunters knew who to talk to about the latest in hunting techniques. Farmers knew who to talk to regarding the latest in agricultural technology practices. (And students could talk to their brilliant teachers!) Now we have the Internet to access more information about whatever we need to know. However, now there is not necessarily a need anymore to find “the” expert in a field of study. Instead, we need to create our own network of experts, our own Personal Learning Network.

What is a Personal Learning Network? It is a collection of resources that you can go to when you want to learn something. This includes family and friends, teachers, and people in the local community. It can also include non-human resources, such as books, journals and other forms of media. In the 21st century, there’s also an extensive electronic network of resources that you can – and should – include in your network. This includes resources on the Internet such as webpages, podcasts, and the electronic databases that AHS subscribes to. But it also includes human resources that are available to you via the Internet, your own personal collection of “experts” on various topics from all over the world. One way to build that collection of experts is via RSS Feeds, which allows you to subscribe to their content and have it delivered to you in your RSS Aggregator (e.g., [Google Reader](#)). Every time they produce new content, it automatically gets delivered to you, allowing you to tap their knowledge and wisdom from afar. It helps you to develop your own understanding of the world, to participate in the conversations that are going on, and to have a say in the world in which we live. For this class, the RSS portion of your Personal Learning Network will have four parts to it: **Read, Think/React/Reflect, Present and Repeat.**

Read:

During the first six weeks, I am going to give you three categories in which you can read from various feeds that you will choose to subscribe to. You will put them into the following categories:

- **Education:** [2 cents worth](#), [The Fischbowl](#), [Weblogg-ed](#), [Dan Maas \(LPS’s CIO\)](#)
- **Local News:** [Denver Post Feeds](#), [Rocky Mountain News Feeds](#)
- **World News:** [BBC Feeds](#), [Global Village Online Feeds](#), [Nata Village Blog](#)

After the first 6 weeks, I am going to allow you to add two more categories. You will still read from the first three, but we will add these two categories:

- **School Blogs:** our own class blog (smithenglish90708.blogspot.com) plus other class blogs at AHS
- **Special Interest:** what matters to you

Think/React/Reflect:

Besides reading these feeds at school and at home, there are some other requirements to creating and maintaining your Personal Learning Network. You will need to blog at least **two** entries per week in your own personal blog. What are you going to blog about?

- What matters from what you are reading? Think big question we are focusing on all semester. Think text to self connections.
- How does it connect to what we are doing in class? Think text to text connections.
- How it relates to our world around us? Think text to world connections.

You need to make sure you are answering these questions in your personal blog entries.

Present:

One benefit of a Personal Learning Network is that people are able to hear what you have to say; in fact, they WANT to know your opinion. During the semester, you are required to formally present **TWICE** about your personal learning network and react to each others' presentations on the presenter's personal blog. Our presentations will take place every Friday. We will sign up for these presentations at the beginning of the semester.

Requirements of your presentations are:

- Stand in the front of the class with your blog projected on the screen behind you
- Present your blog entries
- Talk about what you are reading, what matters from it, how does it connect to what we are doing in class, and how does it relate to the world around us?
- Presentation must be organized- Use an organizational strategy to keep your presentation on track without reading from notes or the screen.
- Make eye contact with audience
- Must be creative and interesting
- Time 2-3 minutes
- You are not allowed to miss on your assigned presentation day!
- Stand up straight
- No fidgeting: keep arms and hands in good speaker positions
- Practice, Practice, Practice- why? Because we are going to podcast your presentation for the world to hear.

Repeat:

We will be doing this all semester long, repeating this process every week. I am asking you to reflect at least twice a week in your own personal blog, reflect on the presenter's blog after their presentation as well as challenging yourself to think about the world and creating personal connections to it.

I hope that by the end of the semester you will have learned more than you ever thought possible. Remember, if you don't participate in the conversations around you, you have no right to complain about the decisions.