CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON TEACHING EXCELLENCE
TEACHING AND TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP SERIES

# USING BLOGS TO ENHANCE LEARNING



Mike Truong, Instructional Technologist, CRTE
Anne Zanzucchi, Associate Director, MWP

# Presentation Outline

1. What is a blog?
2. How does blogging benefit teaching and learning?
3. What are the instructional and technical considerations ?
4. How can blogging support different learning outcomes? – Group Activity
5. Case Studies: MWP
6. Resources

# Workshop Outcomes

*By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to…*

1. Identify key teaching and learning benefits of a blog tool.

2. Review common blog features to translate into instructional purposes.

3. Select blog-supported activities that address specific learning levels.

# What is a blog?

- A blog – a shorthand term that means "Web log" – is an online collection of postings (e.g., personal commentary, photos, links, etc.) displayed in reverse-chronological order.

- The ease of use, the conversation between author and reader, and the building of a sense of community are main reasons why blogs are so popular as an educational tool.

- Common blog tools include Blogger, WordPress, Live Journal, and TypePad.

# Teaching Benefits

1. Serves as a tool to encourage more reading, more writing, and more reflection.

2. Organizes class discussion, especially for large courses.

3. Empowers students to play an active role in contributing to "class conversation."

4. Replaces/supplements the standard class website to allow for the sharing of course-related ideas and resources.

5. Provides students with real-world practices.

**For more ideas see:**

☐ http://www.educause.edu/ELI/ELIDiscoveryToolGuidetoBloggin/WhatFacultyWanttoKnow/13566

# Learning Benefits

1. Provides opportunities to practice reading, writing, and reflecting.

2. Facilitates peer review process of reading and responding.

3. Contributes to community-building via discussion forum.

4. Encourages independent learning by giving students creative control over their own blog or blog postings.

5. Cultivates important communication skills, such as writing for an external audience.

**For more ideas see:**

- http://www.educause.edu/ELI/ELIDiscoveryToolGuidetoBloggin/ReflectingWritingandResponding/13562

# Instructional Considerations

1. Start with your **pedagogical goals,** then consider whether blogging will help achieve that goal.

2. The **amount of time** it takes to incorporate blogging into a course depends on how you use it.

3. How you **assess** student blogging activities depends on its role in the overall course design.

4. Due to the **public-nature** of blogs, students need to be reminded about audience.

5. As a member of the online community, students need to learn blogging **"net-etiquettes."**

# Technical considerations

1. What is the **technical competency** of instructor and students with regards to blogging tool?

2. How much **time** will be allotted to setup and introduction to blogging tool?

3. Will there be one **class blog** or many individual **student blogs**?

4. If students require **technical help**, where will they get support?

5. Beyond text postings, are you expecting students to post **other materials**, such as attachments?

# Blogging and Learning Outcomes



Bloom's Taxonomy for Thinking
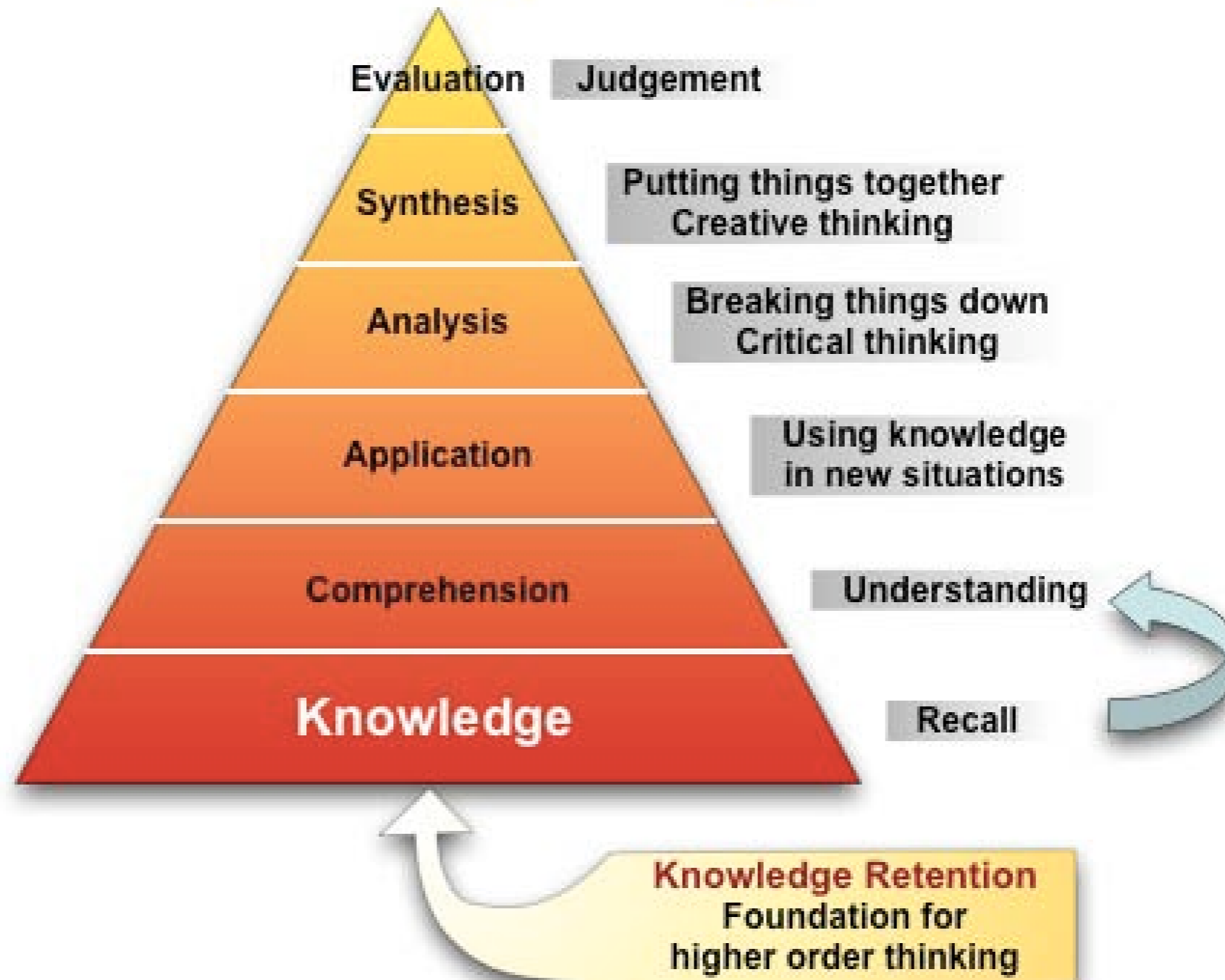
# Group Activity

- In a small group, you will receive a paper with the different levels of cognition.  Take a minute or two to get familiar it.

- Choose and review one of the following blogs and list its significant features (5 minutes).

  - Prof Hacker: http://goo.gl/6EKF (case-sensitive)

  - Science Friday: http://goo.gl/7d7r (case-sensitive)

- Discuss and list possible classroom blog activities related to your assigned cognition level (5 minutes).

# Classroom Activities Using Blogs

1. Post a homework question.
2. Start a discussion.
3. Have students post discussion questions for tomorrow's class.
4. Have students post their notes for the day.
5. Invite outsiders to comment on student work.
6. Post progress reports on team projects.
7. Have students create their e-portfolios using their own blogs.

# Case Study: MWP & WordPress
# http://mwpblog.ucmerced.edu

# Online Resources

- EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative Discovery Tool: Guide to Blogging
  - http://www.educause.edu/eli/GuideToBlogging
- Blogs for Learning (Michigan State University)
  - http://blogsforlearning.msu.edu/
- Some Uses of Blogs in Education
  - http://www.edtechpost.ca/gems/matrix2.gif
- Ensuring the Net Generation is Net Savvy
  - http://www.educause.edu/ELI/EnsuringtheNetGenerationIsNetS/156766
- UC Merced, Merritt Writing Program Blog
  - http://mwpblog.ucmerced.edu

# Questions? Comments?