

Student Tips for online work...

This year we will often blend online work into Government, Economics, and Senior Current Issues. With the availability of more chrome books, and school wide wireless access, the Internet is more available than its ever been. That's a good thing. Google Docs discussion, blog access and creation, as well active reading of current journalism will be a regular feature of all three classes. Consequently, it is important that you consider the following guidelines to increase your potential of online success...

So, please consider the following...

Ask questions. Anything and everything that you don't understand - Ask! Odds are somebody - teacher included - has wondered the same.

Net Access - If you don't have decent wireless access at home - tell your instructor pronto. This blended learning environment is tuff to do without a solid home base. It's not impossible, so don't give up; public libraries and the High School have access; its just not always the best open hours. And often times a smart phone can fill the wireless void. But your teacher needs to be made aware if you cannot get online consistently. Do not be embarrassed to make that clear. And just so you know, wireless access is NOT you piggy backing the next door neighbor's signal...even if you have broken the password. After you inform your teacher of the problems, you're going to have to work together to set acceptable assignment goals and deadlines. By the same token don't lie that your Internet is broken down, if it isn't, and that your assignment is late because of wireless problems, if it wasn't. Teachers want to help; they do not want to be played.

Third - Spellcheck. I don't know any teacher, me included, who thinks that online abbreviations OMG and LOL and lazy proofing is cute or an acceptable excuse for quality online work. Find out what your instructor expects in regard to spelling and grammar - and follow it.

Also I'd highly recommend, that when it comes to posts of any substantial length...do them in Word or Pages first. Proof 'em out. Read 'em over. Then and only then cut and paste online into the appropriate blended environment. However, make sure that formatting works - its not always a perfect match. After posting you may have to go in and do some formatting adjustments.

Know deadlines. Meet deadlines. Do not make lame excuses for missed deadlines. The twenty-first Century equivalent of "the dog ate my homework" is my Internet went out last night." It's gets old fast. Deadlines are noted on most assignments when posted by me. Turn in times are stamped onto most assignments when posted by you. Pretty tough to argue with a digital timer. And if you cry wolf on that Internet breakdown too often, nobody is going to believe you when it occurs.

Finally in regard to a problem issue...always email your teacher with an update of a particular problem that may be festering within the assignment. We need to know; we want to know. And better for you to have an online record to fall back on.

Do Not Cut and Paste your answers from the Internet - certainly not from Wikipedia. Teachers aren't stupid - and googling to find paste jobs is easy. Copying is plagiarism. You do it and you fail. Online trust once broken is a difficult thing to reacquire. Be smart.

Be Nice - but don't back down. Not with your teacher, nor with fellow students. Think about you in the classroom and follow that lead online. Remember however, posted comments are difficult to retract and can carry a mean edge to them when looked at over and over again. On the other hand you need to speak your mind. Cultivate an online voice. Use it wisely and passionately; be aware however, that once posted it is there forever. This is going to take some time; like with everything else you will probably stumble along the way. If you overstate your case, to the point of hurt feelings don't be embarrassed to apologize to teacher or student.

In the end remember your voice is your most powerful tool to change the world. Do not be afraid to speak with clarity and sincerity, even when and if, some people get offended.

Please be mindful of that power.

Finally - Ask. Ask. and Ask again.

I find persistent emailers to be the most effective online students. Some kids think that teachers will get irritated if you make a request multiple times. I disagree. If you sent an email and you haven't been answered - send it again. Be nice about it; online reminders are a good thing. Think about this; Is your hand consistently up in the classroom? If the answer is yes it's probably because you are an involved, awake, and active student.

So? Be the same online. Post. Post. And post some more.