**Protocols for Guest Blogging:**

In 2015 , SEMIS will recruit several teachers to be Guest Bloggers, and teachers will be prompted to write about 250 words about a topic of interest related to the following topics:

-STEM

-Water Quality

-Great Lakes

-Youth Voice

-Civic Engagement

-Ecology

-Arts Education

-School reform

-Community History

-Literacy

-Land Use

-Civic Engagement

-Ecojustice

-Food Security

-Place Based Education

-Inquiry-Based Learning

There are many other topics, but we would like to recruit teachers and classes with an interest in sharing and reflecting on their place based projects and studies with a larger audience. The protocols for writing a post include identifying a need from your audience (what do they need to know?), writing something that matters to you and is relevant to what you are learning about through SEMIS (like literacy or community history), stick to one topic per post, and plan a time to write that fits with your school schedule. We’ll ask for solicited blog posts on the topics above, and if you have ideas for unsolicited posts please contact us for more information.

**Protocols for Social Media:**

-For Facebook: Post interesting pictures from your class work, quotes or anecdotes, videos relevant to ecojustice, place based education or an interesting resources for educators.

-For Twitter: Find our page by searching @semiscoalition. Please send us short 140 character posts that celebrate accomplishments, announce news from the coalition, or respond to a post (e-mail to amiller84@gmail.com). When creating a post about SEMIS in your own account, make sure to add @semiscoalition so it is searchable. Use the topics list above to your post by adding # before the items highlighted (i.e. #waterquality, #ecojustice) to help twitter users search the content.

### Blogging - Where to Start

**Identify a Need** - When starting to write, try to name a need or problem that my reader has. I find that if I can have this in my mind as I write a post that it not only ends up being a well focused post – it ends up being useful to readers. So as you choose a topic to write about – identify concrete needs that you’re aiming for the post to fulfil and questions that you want the post to answer.

**Picture a Reader** – Keep the situation, needs, questions and challenges of the reader in front of you as you choose topics and write about them. In this way he doesn’t just end up theoretical or abstract topics – but is closer to writing concrete and applicable posts that will connect with readers.

**Write Something that Matters to You** - I find that when I write a post that matters to me (as opposed to one that is merely reporting news or tapping into a popular topic) that it tends to connect on a deeper level with readers. Another way to say this is to ‘let your topics choose you’ rather than you choosing what topics you want to write about.

**Write Something Topical** - Writing on a topic that is currently popular in place-based education or that people are searching for information on is something to keep in mind as you select a topic to post on. Keep an eye on social media sites to see what people are voting for there – these topics can be well worth tapping into – particularly if you find a fresh way to explore them.

**One Topic per Post** – This will vary a little from blog to blog depending upon your niche and style of writing, but posts that hone in on one particular topic and communicate one main idea tend to do best. There is nothing wrong with writing long sweeping posts that cover many things, but do keep in mind that most people’s reading style online is to scan content, flip between pages and not to dwell on any one thing for too long. So refine the topic for your next blog post down to one simple idea. If you have more than one write a series of posts or put those that you’re not going to focus upon into your ideas journal for another day.

**Plan Ahead** – one thing that has helped me a lot in my blogging when it comes to choosing topics to cover is to think ahead about my blogging and develop an editorial calendar. I do this in my computer’s calendar program (like google cal) where I have a calendar dedicated to each of my blogs.

**Crafting a Blog**

[**Choosing a Topic**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/08/14/how-to-choose-a-topic-for-your-next-blog-post/) – take a little extra time defining your topic and the post will flow better and you’ll develop something that matters to readers.

[**Crafting Your Post’s Title**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/08/20/how-to-craft-post-titles-that-draw-readers-into-your-blog/) – perhaps the most crucial part of actually getting readers to start reading your post when they see it in an RSS reader or search engine results page.

[**The Opening Line**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/08/23/11-ways-to-open-a-post-and-get-reader-engagement/) – first impressions matter. Once you’ve got someone past your post’s title your opening line draws them deeper into your post.

[**Your ‘point/s’ (making your posts matter)**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/08/27/does-your-next-blog-post-matter/)- a post needs to have a point. If it’s just an intriguing title and opening you’ll get people to read – but if the post doesn’t ‘matter’ to them it’ll never get traction.

[**Call to Action**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/08/29/12-tips-to-snap-readers-out-of-passivity-with-calls-to-action/) – driving readers to **do** something cements a post in their mind and helps them to apply it and helps you to make a deeper connection with them.

[**Adding Depth**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/09/03/13-ways-to-add-new-dimensions-to-your-next-post/) – before publishing your post – ask yourself how you could add depth to it and make it even more useful and memorable to readers?

[**Quality Control**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/09/06/punctuation-spelling-and-grammar-quality-control-for-bloggers/) **and** [**Polishing of Posts**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/09/09/how-to-polish-posts-individual-blog-post-design/) – small mistakes can be barriers to engagement for some readers. Spending time fixing errors and making a post ‘look’ good can take it to the next level.

[**Timing of Publishing Your Post**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/09/15/when-to-publish-blog-posts-timing-considerations/) – timing can be everything – strategic timing of posts can ensure the right people see it at the right time.

[**Post Promotion**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/09/16/13-ways-to-promote-your-next-blog-post/) – having hit publish – don’t just leave it to chance that your post will be read by people. Giving it a few strategic ‘nudges’ can increase the exposure it gets exponentially by posting on Facebook, Twitter feeds and newsletters.

[**Conversation**](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/10/01/13-tips-on-how-to-have-great-conversations-on-your-blog/) – often the real action happens once your post is published and being interacted with by readers and other bloggers. Taking time to dialogue can be very fruitful.

### Techniques

* [Make Your Writing Scannable](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/08/19/writing-blog-content-make-it-scannable/) – one of the most important tips for online writing. Lists, bold keywords, border and block quotes and pictures all help to guide the readers eyes down the page
* [How Long Should a Blog Post Be?](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/02/18/post-length-how-long-should-a-blog-post-be/) – another common question about writing posts -250 words is optimal, enough to cover the content but not too long to lose readers.
* [Using Titles Effectively on Blogs](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/02/19/using-titles-effectively-on-blogs/) – keep it simple and specific, grab attention through intrigue and key words - i.e. ecojustice, water quality, permaculture, etc.
* [How Often Should a Blogger Post](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/03/15/how-often-should-a-blogger-post/) - Consistency in posting times, linking to other sites frequently used by your audience (Facebook, newsletter), and monitoring the use of the blog comments can help to gauge how well your blog is being utilized
* [Why Guest Posts are Great for a Blog](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2007/02/27/why-guest-bloggers-are-great-for-a-blog/) - Creating a loose protocol for guest bloggers to follow, like a one question prompt or interview, will help to keep it simple and straightforward.

### Principles of Successful Content Creation

* [Writing Good Content](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/02/18/writing-good-content/) – the two basic elements of good blog content – usefulness and uniqueness

[Blogging as an Educational Tool](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/blogging-in-21st-century-classroom-michelle-lampinen) - This article post goes into detail about how to engage a high school audience in blogging -

**Guide to Twitter and Social Media Utilization:**

[“Mom, this is how Twitter works.”](http://www.momthisishowtwitterworks.com/)

An incredibly helpful guide to the basics of using Twitter.

[Social Media Curriculum](http://www.jeadigitalmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/beth_phillips_social_media.pdf)

Lots of ideas for how to introduce the ethics, social studies and free speech aspects around using social media

**“Twitter for Good”, by Claire Diaz-Ortiz**

**T**arget: Twitter accounts tend to have three general targets

* Information Accounts: Information hubs for organizations interested in a particular topic. More general and impersonal.
* Personal Accounts: For a more established organization that want to have a signature voice (like leadership or dedicated SM manager)
* Fundraising Accounts: Sole mission is to engage multiple users in following a campaign and gaining support for a cause.

**W**rite:

* Just get started and fail fast! Mistakes are inevitable
* Don’t edit yourself! Send out more information rather than less.
* Tweet from wherever you are - photos, links, real-time updates that intrigue.

 **E**ngage: Utilize Twitter features to understand

* Use hashtags for topics that you tweet about on a regular basis (i.e. # STEM, #science, #placebaseded, #MichEd, #ecojustice).
* Use Lists -it’s a feature that helps you find a demographic or interest group that you’d like to follow as a group. Click on the gear icon for a twitter user to add them to your specific list themed around a particular topic (i.e. SEMIS Coalition members)
* Use @replies to engage users with your message and to build the interest and connection to your organization with others in our network.
* Retweet posts that are relevant to your organization, but also rewrite content to share what another organization is doing.
* Connect others with resources that are useful to them - make sure to reply often with relevant links!

**E**xplore: Find other organizations doing relevant work to build our network.

* Regularly search for mentions of the SEMIS organization
* Find influencers on Twitter and mention in posts to gain a larger audience

**T**rack: This is a resource for our organization to understand our reach in community.

* Number of Tweets per day/week/month
* Number of followers
* Number of following
* Number of @mentions and @replies