



## Finalist 'Best Digital Resource'

**Name:** Jerome Cargill

**School:** Newlands College, Wellington

**Name of digital resource:** Year Group Blog (<https://ncclassof2013.wordpress.com/>)

### 1. Describe the digital resource that you want to be considered for the award:

The Newlands College Year 11 Blog is a unique blog for the secondary sector. It has evolved from what began as a Year 9 blog in 2013, and has continued for almost 3 years now. We are fortunate to have a pastoral team that retains its continuity throughout the years, meaning the Form Teachers and Dean stay with the cohort, making the online relationship that the blog offers with the students and community even more significant. The blog acts as a hub for all things relating to the year level. In the beginning they tended to be administrative and celebratory. Photos, video, links as well as text help to share the experiences of the students as they participate in their learning journeys. This year, posts have involved much more content to reinforce the student's learning as it has become a learning hub to help navigate the students through NCEA Level One.

### 2. Why did you choose to set up this resource?

A number of parents find the shift between Primary and Secondary does mean a change in the way information is communicated; however, the Y11 blog offers a portal to the goings on in the Year Group and offers starting points for home conversations, thus bridging the gap between home and school. The content is also directly helping the students, from study guides, NCEA information, and a one-stop shop for a whole host of important links. Blogging is a familiar tool that is an important feature in the online environment. By engaging in this platform it helps to model digital citizenship and positive engagement with the web. A real world audience becomes available for students who contribute and showcase their achievements. The connections to the New Zealand Curriculum are strong, particularly the key competencies where participation and contribution to the community is fostered with this platform for sharing.

### 3. How do you operate and manage the resource?

It is operated by myself as the Year 11 Dean. I respond to the needs of the Year Group and the events and goings on in the school - posting things like Dean's Assemblies and links to online content related to the Year Group. Where appropriate I'll invite a student to contribute to the blog by doing a quick write up on the event. This in itself offers valuable learning opportunities as writing for an intended audience is a skill that they sometimes need some support with. Over half the year group has now had their work featured on the blog. Some of the time, students approach me with news of events or happenings that they would like to share on the blog. Occasionally other teachers also prepare content or approach me with ideas. This is all done with the full support of Senior Management who moderate posts before they are published.

### 4. What outcomes has it achieved for you and your class? (If possible, please include links to supporting material, so we can see the results.):

The underlying principle to the resource is that learners will give themselves the best chance of success if they are informed. The outcomes have been significant, seeing a shift in online engagement from the Year Group. The number of hits (anticipating 100,000 by the end of the year) and followers (142 now and climbing) is a clear indicator of the engagement of the community with this initiative. The most significant impact the blog has had is around exams and assessments. As a hub for revision planning, study skills, and information about the content of assessments (along with a plethora of links to help), the blog has bloomed, also seeing significant engagement from outside Newlands from students wanting to benefit from study advice. Directly targeting NCEA this year has meant guides on how to read and achievement standard and help navigating the labyrinth of the NZQA website.

The success of this aspect of the blog has confirmed its value as a digital resource and as a learning tool. It would be risky to make any concrete assertions to claim the impact on enhancing student achievement as lots of initiatives occur around this time; it's clear from the engagement of the year group in the blog and anecdotal evidence from parents, students, and the community that it holds a very valuable place in the identity of the cohort. Our Year Group's goal is to gain the best results for a Year 11 cohort at Newlands College. Currently, tracking indicates we will achieve this and I strongly believe the blog is integral to this success.