Dear Parents and Families,

I am very excited to inform you of our next big learning adventure! Starting this week, each child will become the author of his or her own blog! Internet savvy is more important than ever in our world, and blogging and social networking have become huge forums for discussions and the sharing of knowledge. As I work to prepare your child for their future, I want to give them as many authentic writing experiences as possible.

I am thrilled to have found Kidblog as a resource. Kidblog (at kidblog.org) is designed specifically for teachers and students, and is completely secure.


I have set up a class network of blogs, where each child has their own, and they are all connected through me. In this way, we can communicate amongst each other, but our work will not be visible or accessible to the public at large. Your child will have their own specific password, which will give them access to edit their own blog, as well as the ability to comment on other students' blogs. However, each and every post and comment will come to me first for approval. In this way I can monitor the conversations and ensure that everything is positive and appropriate.

Because our class is made up of young children who are still learning their way around reading, writing, and technology, I will also be counting on you to support your child's work in this project. I know many of you may be very comfortable with this type of thing, and for others it may be brand new. In order to support you and your child, I have created this guide to help you to understand how to navigate and maintain a blog. So, here goes!

When accessing our class network, you can get there in one of two ways. The easiest is to put this web address directly into your browser.

(Write in your class blog address here.)

If you do that, it will take you directly to a screen that looks similar to this (with my name at the top):
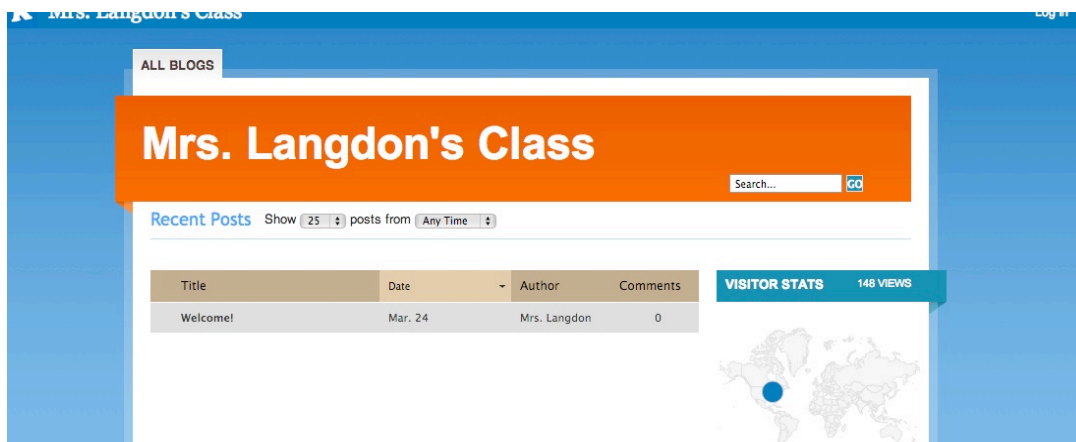

If, at any time, you forget the web address for our class, you can also access it through a search. You can go directly to **kidblog.org** There is a small tab in the upper right hand corner that says "login." If you click on that, you are prompted to either enter the class web address, or my email address. You can enter my email address:
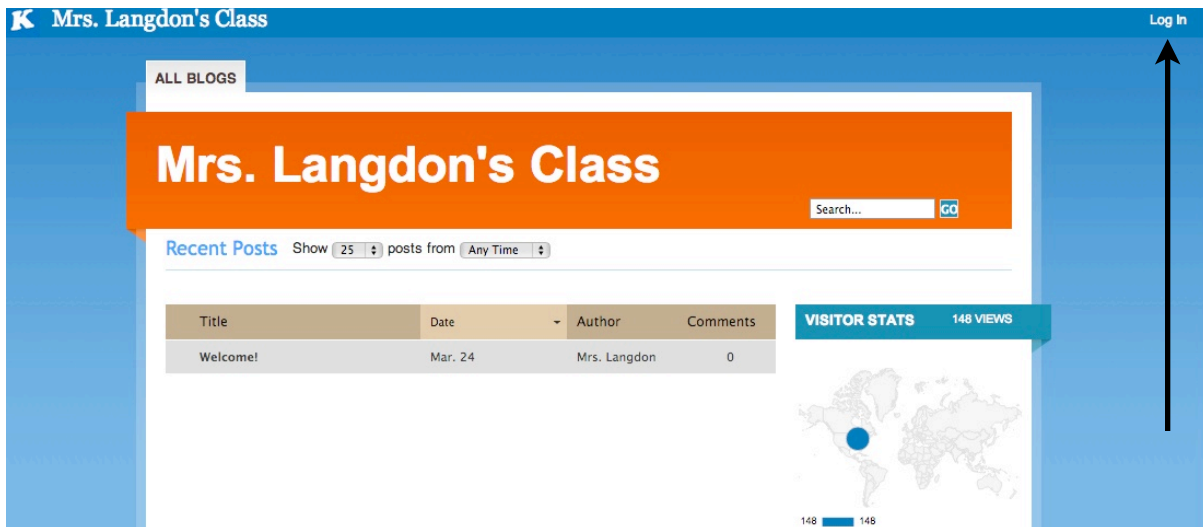
in this box.

It will then take you to a screen that reminds you what our actual link is, and it will give you a link to click on to get there.
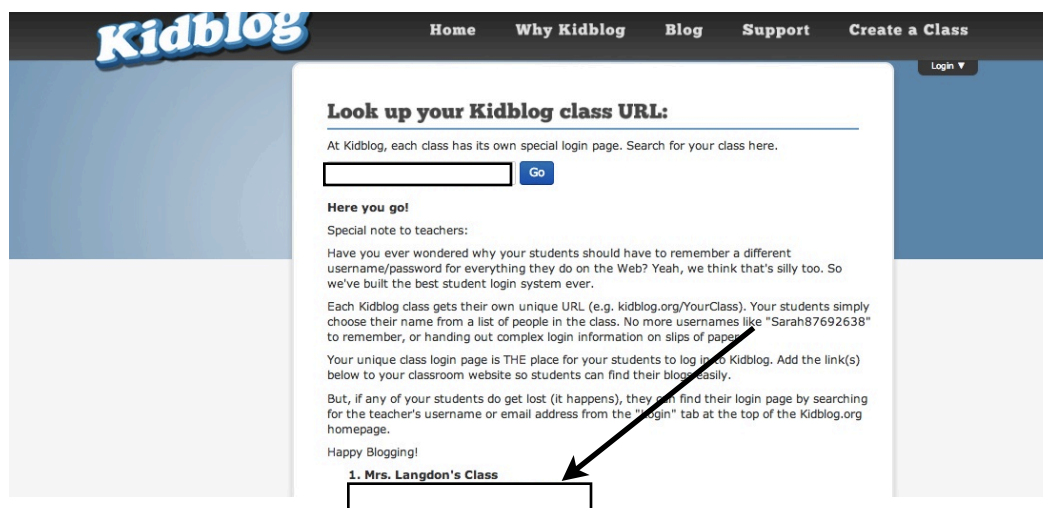
Using either method, you should end up on a screen that looks similar to this:

From there, your child will need to login to his or her personal blog. There is a small "Log In" button in the upper right hand corner of the above page. Click on that, and you will arrive at a screen that looks like this:

There is a drop down list of all of the blogs in our network (basically, each student, as well as me.) Your child will select his or her name, and then enter their password. I have assigned passwords for each student, which I will send to you separately.

Once logged in, the screen will look very similar. However, your child will now have access to a tab on the top called "MY BLOG." If they are ready to post something on their blog, this is the place to go.
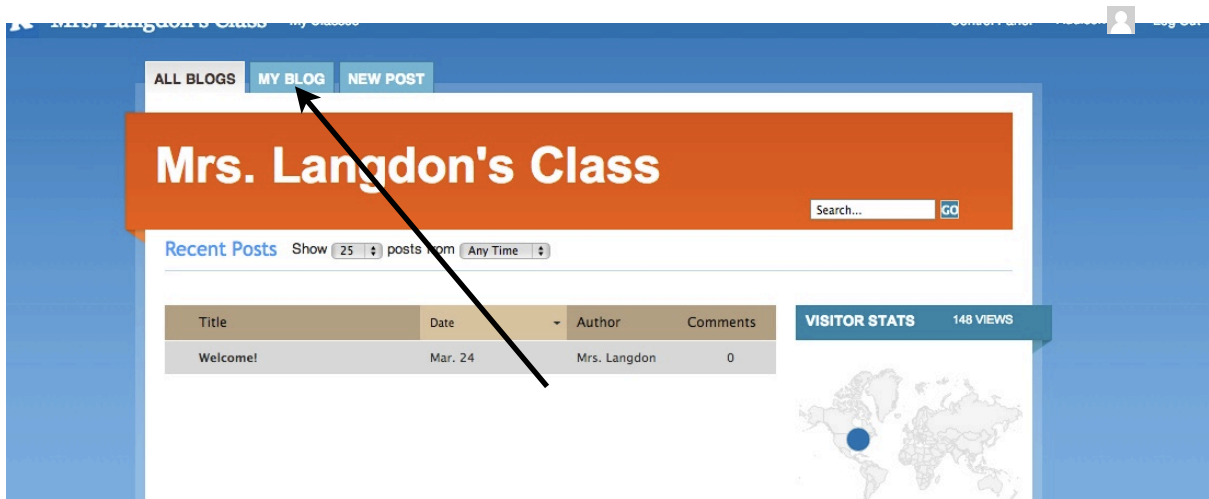
This will then take your child to their own, personal blog. There, they can read what they have already posted, as well as any comments that have been left. In addition, they can add a "New Post" by clicking on the "New Post" button.

Once you click on "New Post", you will enter a new area of the blog with a new set of options. It will take you directly to the "Add New Post" screen, which looks like this:

This is the screen where your child will type any text they want to include in their post, and upload any photos they want to include in a post. I will explain how to add photos shortly. Please review the diagram below to find several important features.

Enter the post title here.

Save a post here that is not ready to be published.

Begin typing the content of the post here.

Use these keys for formatting, just as you would in any word processing program.

Preview a post to see how it will look once it is published.

Publish a post (which will send it to me for approval. It will not appear on the blog until I approve it.)

In this area of the blog, you will also have access to other types of information, including your child's "Dashboard" (with statistics on their posts and comments), all of their posts (which they can review or edit at any time), their "Comments" (that they receive on their own posts), and their "Profile" (where they can edit the look of their blog.)

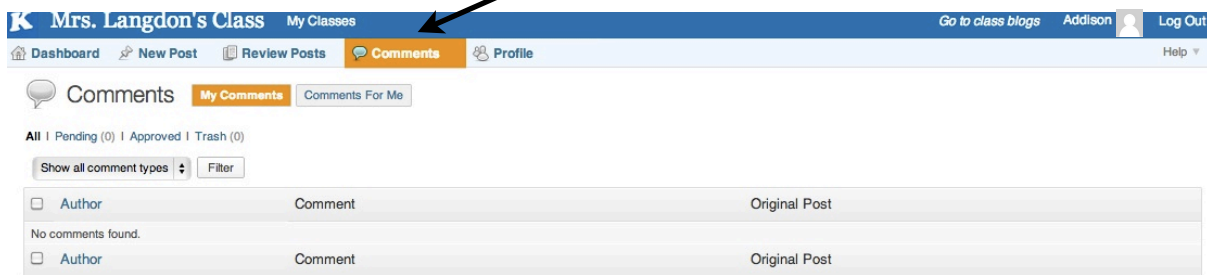Here is what each of those areas looks like:

"Dashboard"
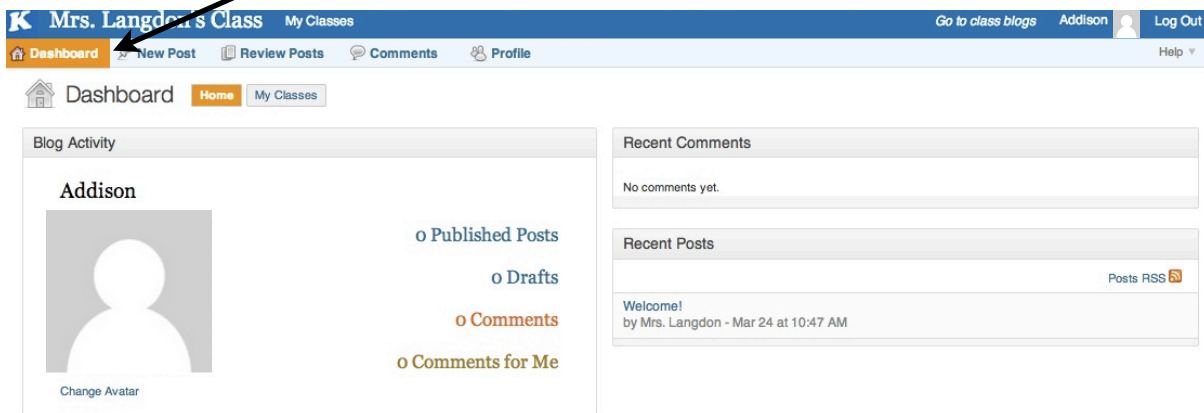
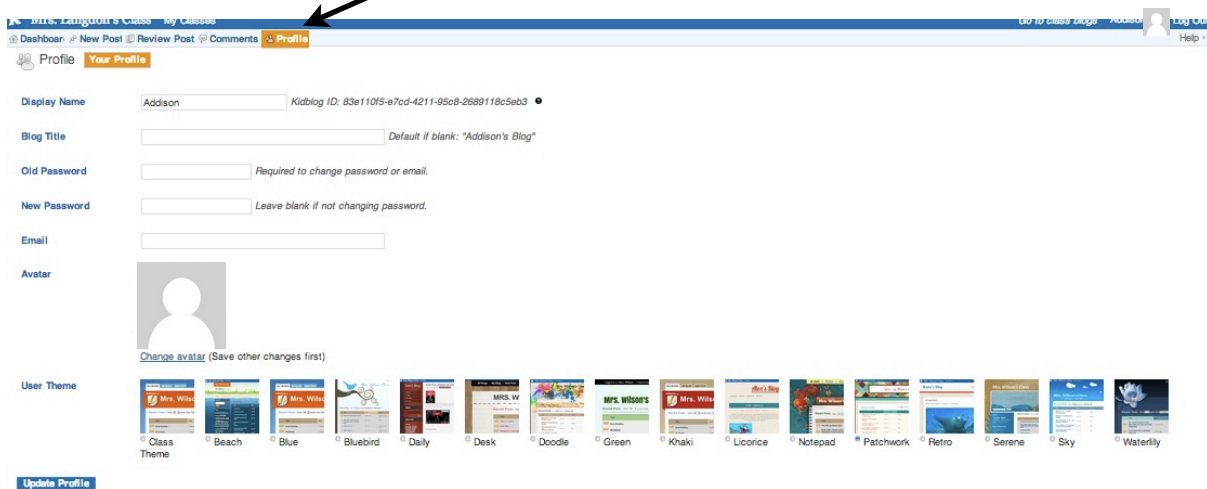"Review Posts"
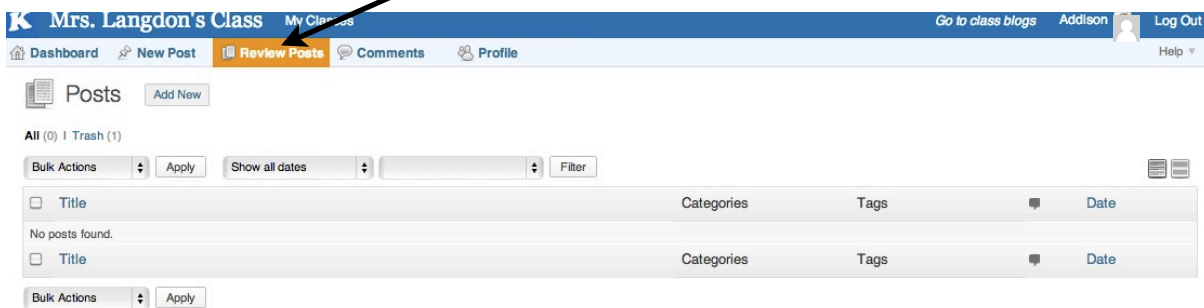
"Comments"

"Profile"

Your child will probably be particularly interested in their profile section early on. This is where they can choose the "theme" or look of their blog, as well as change their profile picture if they so desire.

Now I will explain how to upload photos. You can use any digital photos that you have on your computer. So, if you take a photo on your phone, ipad, or other camera and load it on to your computer, it will be available. Just be sure you know where you have saved it on your computer. For example, you might want to make a folder called "kidblog photos" to make things easy on yourself, and save any photos that your child wants to use in that folder.

First, go to the "New Post" tab, where your child can enter a new blog post. On that screen, just above the large text box, there is a button called "Upload/Insert Media." Click on that small camera.
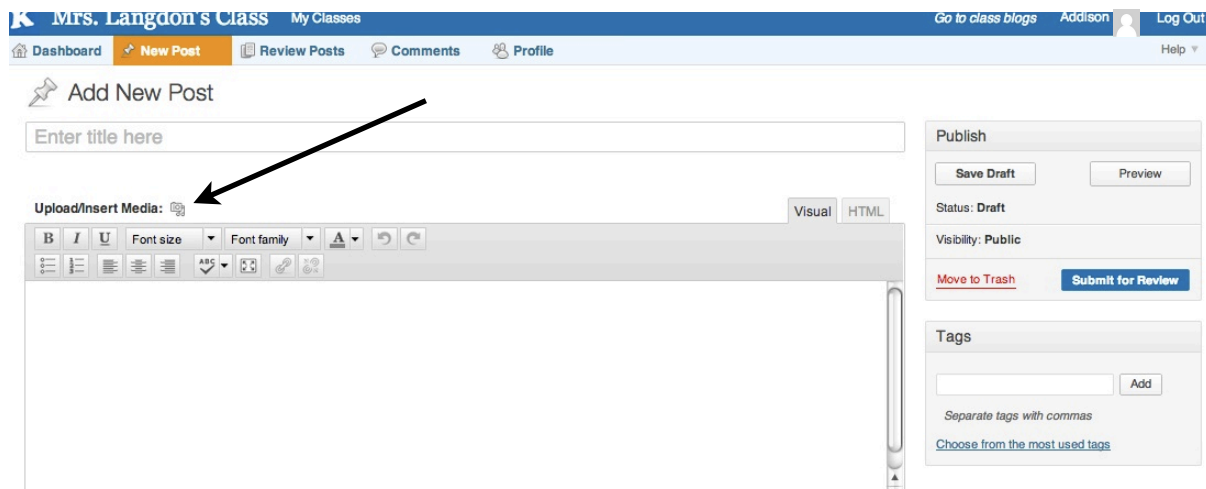

It will open a dialog box that looks like this: (Click on the "Select Files" button when you get here.)
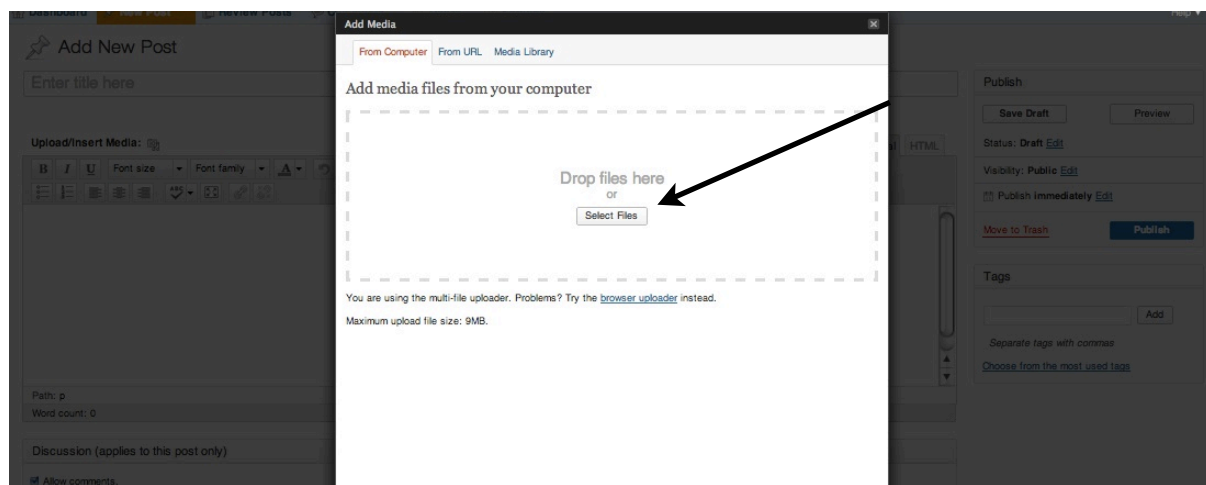
You will then be able to browse on your computer to find the photo or photos you want to upload. If your child wants to put two or three photos in to the post, you can upload them all at the same time. To select multiple photos at the same time, you just hold the Ctrl or Command (for a MAC) key down as you select the photos. This is the time when you will need to know *where* on your computer you saved the photos, so that the upload is simple. Once you have uploaded the photo/s, your screen will show the photo that is available. You can either exit out of this dialog box, or hit "Insert into post." If you hit "insert into post" the photo will appear in the blog post.
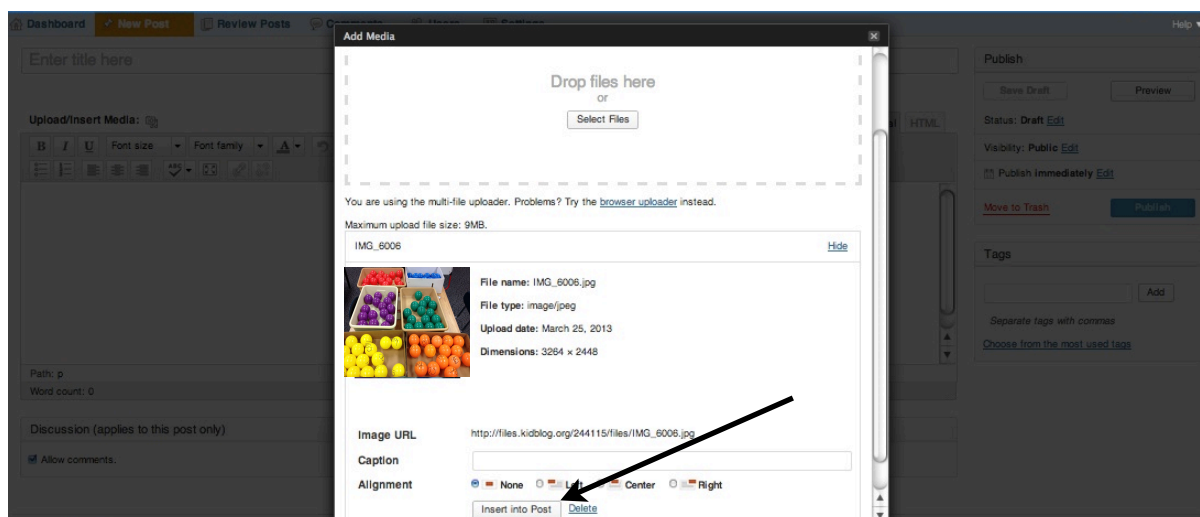

Once it is inserted, it will look something like this: (You can also center or right/left align the photo by using the same buttons that you use for text. Simply select the photo, then hit whichever button you want to use.)
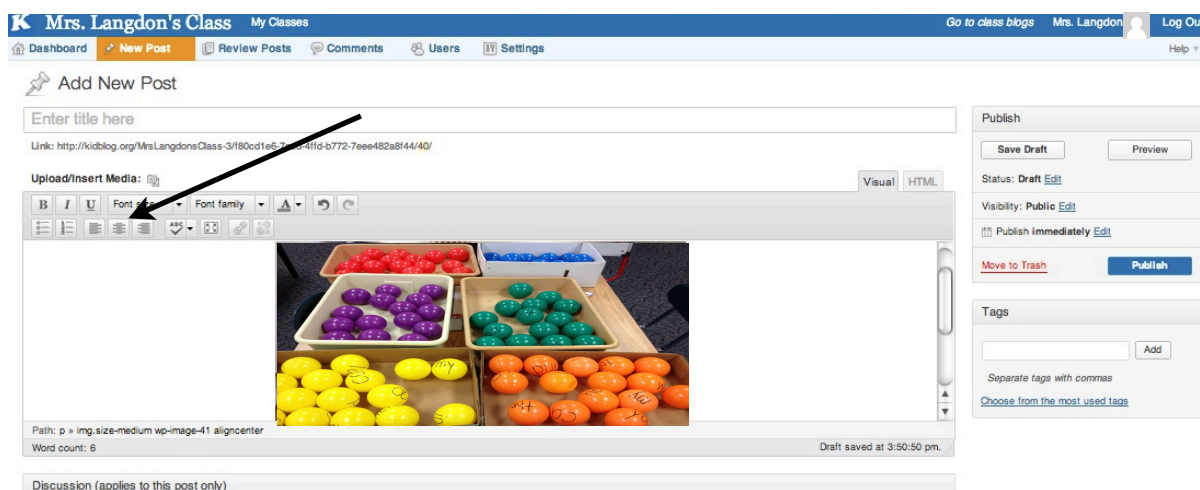
Writing a blog post is just one thing your child will be doing as part of this project. The other step will be to read and comment on other students' blogs. In order to do this, they will need to access the other blogs.
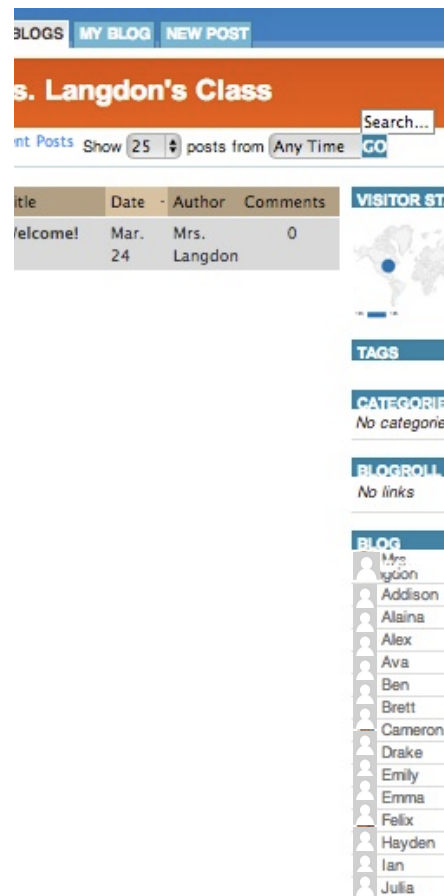
First, click on the button on the very top of the blog that says, "_____'s Class." It is in large text in the blue bar at the top of the screen.
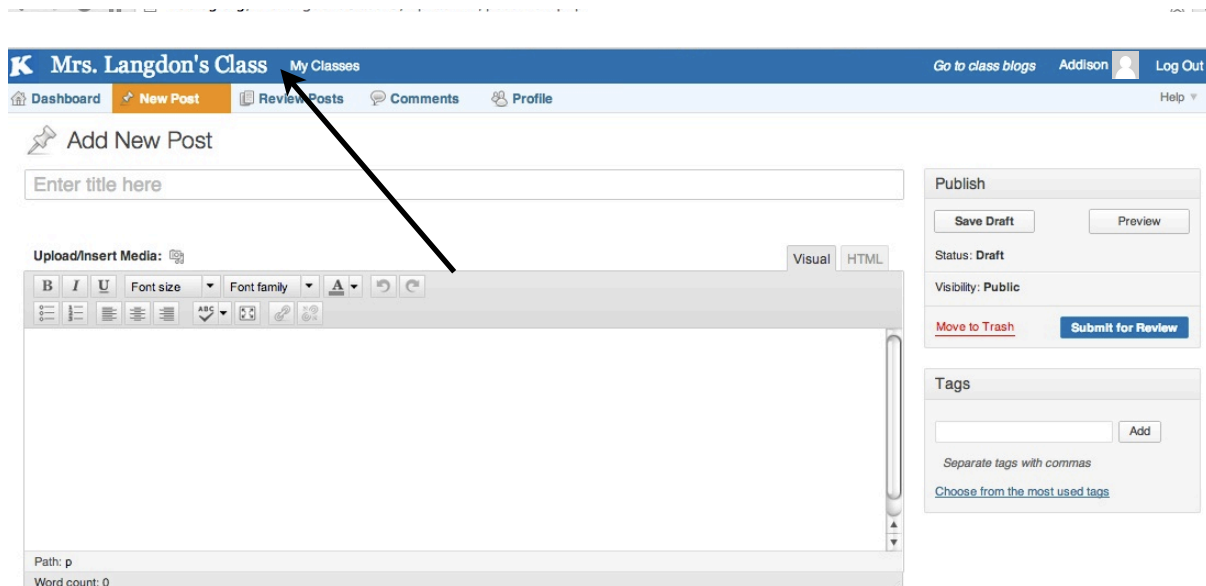
It will take you back to a screen similar to this:
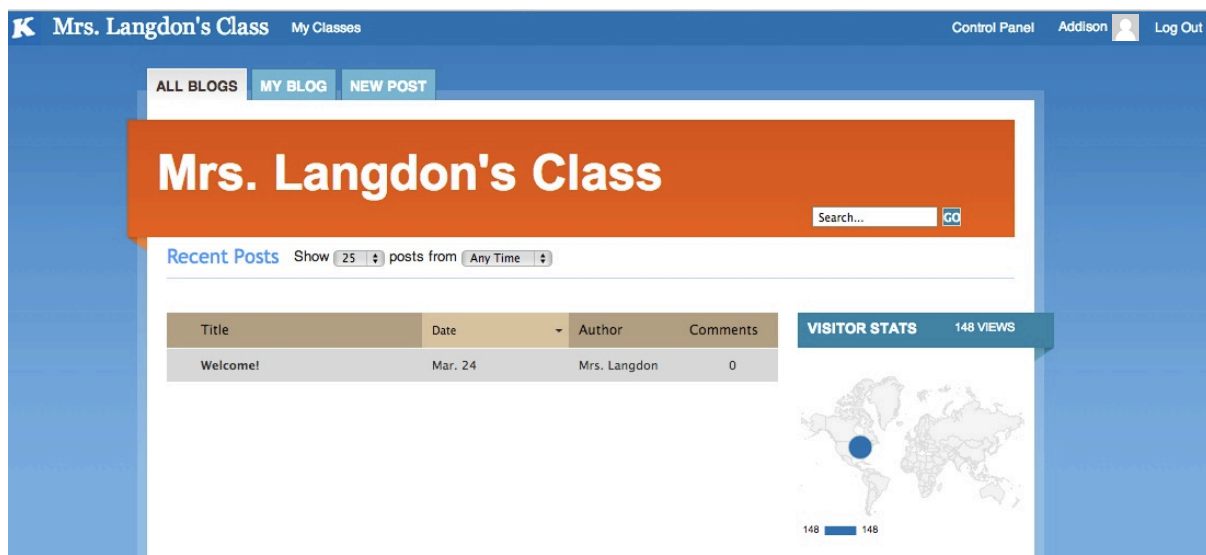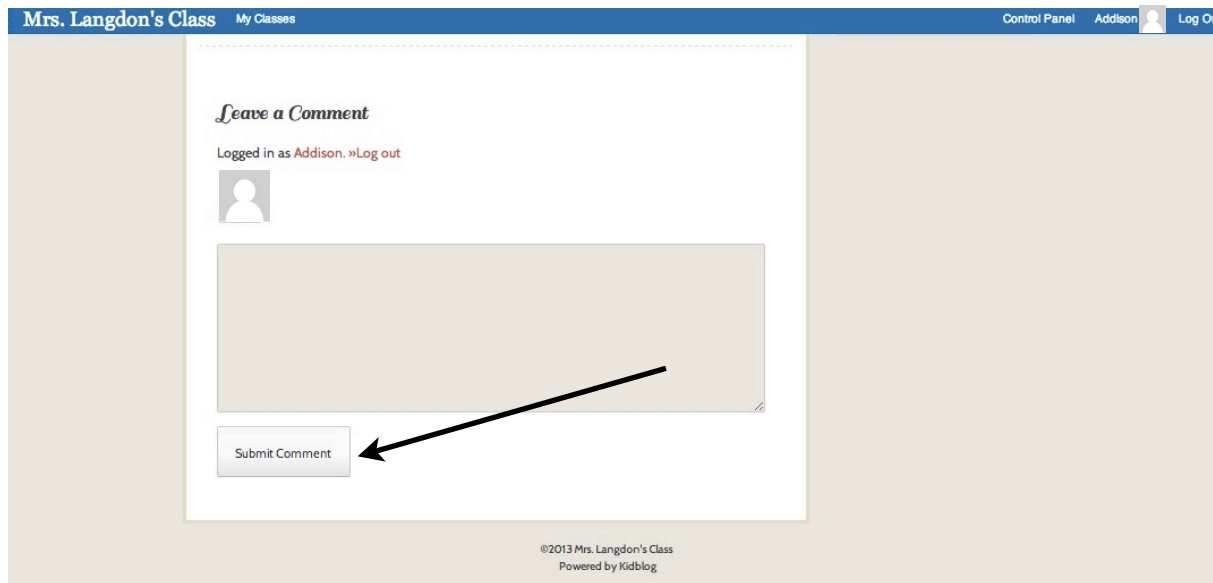
When you scroll down on the page, you will see a list of all the students in the class. If you click on another student's name, you will be taken to their blog.

When you get to that student's blog (or my blog), you will be able to read their posts. You will also be able to make comments. Immediately under a post, there is link that says, "Leave a comment." Your child can simply click on that link and type in a comment on the post.
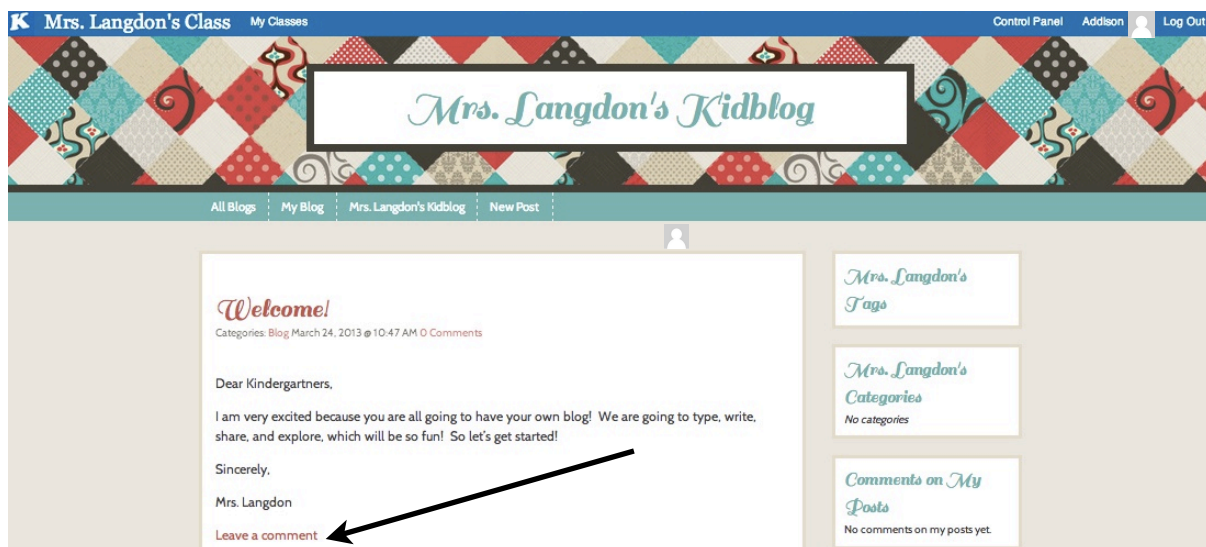
A dialog box will come up, where your child will type in their comment. They will then need to hit "submit comment" to send it. Remember, all comments will come to *me* first for approval, so your comments will not appear on the blog immediately.

Ok, that's about it! Please know that this is a brand new experience for me as well, so we will all be learning together as we go. Here are some important guidelines to keep in mind:

1. Don't be afraid to ask! I will try to answer questions through email to help if need be. You can also type questions into google and get lots of assistance. Kidblog is run like Wordpress blogs. I will put this document up on the main class website as well (under the Projects tab), so you will always be able to reference it if you need to.

2. Let your child do the work. While I know that your child will need your help, please let them do most of the work! They should be the one holding the mouse, clicking on boxes, and making things happen. If need be, you can stand over their shoulder and direct them, but *please let them do it.* That is the only way they will learn!

3. Let your child do the typing as well. I do not expect long blog posts or comments. I do want your child to begin to practice with the keyboard, and to do the work of finding the letters they want. They can work on a computer or an ipad, but let them do the hunting. They may need a few reminders about certain keys, like the Enter/Return key and the space bar. Please encourage them to use spaces and punctuation, and practice figuring out how to do that. I will instruct them here at school, and you can support them at home. They can also do the spelling. Invented spelling is expected and welcome! As long as your child is attempting to hear and record sounds (and not just typing gibberish or holding down keys) it is great. I expect to see things like "I wz hpe to go to Shcugo fis wknd." if they are trying to type "I was happy to go to Chicago this weekend." I would not expect "dddddddddhhhhhhhhhhwwwwwwwww." Please contact me if you want clarification.

4. Encourage interaction! One of the most wonderful things about the internet is the ease it provides for us in communicating with people. Encourage your child to make comments on other blogs, ask questions, and reply to comments that are left on their own blog. Let's make this a conversation!

5. Have fun. I am super excited to use this great tool to encourage wonderful writing, video work, science recordings, and more. Please let me know if you have ideas as well - I am open to exploring!

A Bit More About Me!

As an educator, I am committed to providing students and teachers with relevant and useful instructional materials and activities that allow them to be creative and practical. All of the products I sell are things I use and do in my own classroom!

If you like this unit, have questions or comments, or are interested in other items that I have created, please consider following me on my blog, TPT, Pinterest, or Facebook by following these links:

http://www.teachingace.com/
http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Karen-Langdon
http://pinterest.com/karenelangdon/
https://www.facebook.com/TeachingAce

I have also created a collection of products designed specifically for MAC computer users with Pages software. I spent lots of time developing documents that I can quickly drop images into and reuse from year to year. You will find everything from reading certificates to "just right" books. It is so easy for me to update and personalize everything for each group of children, and you can benefit from that too!

You can also view and access all of these products on my website. Just go here: teachingace.com On my website you will find all of my products, as well as opportunities to ask questions and make requests.

Please rate, review, vote, and follow me!

Thanks, and I hope you enjoy my work!

Sincerely,
Karen Langdon