



The News-Times/Carol Kaliff

Newtown High School science teacher Frank LaBanca, with students Carly Toherly, 15, and Bob Lapple, 16, won a national award for his blog.

Award-winning blog proves to be teacher's best aid

By Robert Gold
THE NEWS-TIMES

NEWTOWN

NEWTOWN — Forget thumbing through her files and notebooks. Rebecca Reed just flips on her computer and looks at a blog set up by her high school science teacher.

Online, the 15-year-old Newtown High School student can find notes for her independent science class. She can find updates on her classmates' projects.

"You don't have to worry about papers falling on the floor," Reed said about the blog run by her teacher Frank LaBanca.

The blog, which LaBanca began this year, has earned him national recognition. It won a Best Classroom Instruction Blog for Students award from eSchool

News, an online publication, beating roughly 160 other blogs.

LaBanca will head to Orlando, Fla., Thursday for a conference about online learning sponsored by Discovery Education.

Since LaBanca started his blog, he posts homework information or asks questions online, and his students can post their responses without passwords.

"It's just so easy to use," LaBanca said.

One question was "Are science and creativity related?"

Students wrote essays detailing their thoughts.

LaBanca uses blogs in all his classes, but they are especially useful for the independent research classes, he said. They let students keep in touch instead of toiling away in soli-

tude on a project.

"It really lets you bounce ideas off each other," said Dan Bunger, a 16-year-old junior in the class.

LaBanca said the blog also lets students show their personalities. Some post replies immediately, but others take their time before sending out information.

Either way, LaBanca said, the program helps him teach his students even when they are scattered around town.

"It's certainly a cinch to use," he said.

Visit Newtown High School science teacher Frank LaBanca's Web site at www.labanca.net. His class blog is at www.applied-science-research.blogspot.com

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