GETTING STARTED ON THE **FLEX** NING

A ning is a social networking web that is particularly good for organizations. **Every member of the ning can contribute events, add photos, point to interesting links, and start discussions. We will be using the FLEX ning to post events of interest, keep track of the activities of the student exchange, and link to handouts for our events.** You may also want to use the FLEX VA ning to keep a personal blog about your professional interests, so that others can learn from you.

Although the first page of the FLEX ning is visible to all, the rest of the ning is private.

Signing Up and Signing In

To join the ning, go to http://flexva.ning.com and click on the **Sign Up** button. You'll be asked to supply an e-mail address and create a password. You'll also be asked your age (although you needn't display it). Finally, in order to become a member of the ning, you need to answer questions about where and what you teach. (You can always change your answers later.)

Once you are a member of the ning, you can sign in at any time by clicking the Sign In button.

Your Profile

Once you have signed in, you will see your name (here it's 'Global Studio'), a Sign Out link, and other useful links in the upper-right corner. **Your Inbox** is where you will find messages others have sent you. From the Inbox, you can also compose messages to send to others.

Click **My Settings** to change your profile, upload a (new) picture, etc. There is also a **Set Privacy** function, if you want to restrict content more than the ning's default settings. You can also **Set E-mail Notifications**. Because there is not much activity on the ning, you might want to be notified when anyone adds content. Just remember which e-mail address you used to join, since that's where the notifications will be sent!

If you haven't hidded the big green box on the main page, you can also get to your profile by clicking **Edit profile**.

Navigating the Ning

The easiest way to navigate the ning is to use the tabs under the title.

To see content contributed by others that is not featured on the main page, click on the member's picture. For example, links to the handouts for the October 2, 2008, meeting will be posted on Sharon Scinicariello's page.

Your Page

When you click the **My Page** tab, you arrive at a page where you can organize all the content you contribute. The content navigation is on the left. You can customize this page as you like. You can even add an RSS feed that interests you. (Maybe you can add your Voki to the Text Box!)

What can I do in the ning?

The big green box that opens on the main page links to some basic functions of the ning. **You can close the box by clicking the x in the upper-right corner.**

Invite Colleagues

Use the **Invite friends** link to invite the participation of any colleague for whom you have an e-mail address.

Add Photos and Videos

Use the **Add photos** and **Add a video** links to upload photos and videos from your computer. You can also embed video from YouTube and other popular video sites using the 'embed' codes provided by the sites.

Start or Contribute to a Discussion

The **Start a discussion** link opens a new discussion in the **Forum**. To contribute to an existing discussion, click on the discussion's title under **Forum** on the main page.

Note: Some discussions are not featured on the Main Page. You can find more discussions by clicking on the **Forum** tab. Groups may have separate discussions.

Add an Event

Perhaps the most important function of the FLEX ning is the ability to post events. Any member of the ning can **Add an event**. You must, however, have a picture to associate with the event. If you don't have anything handy, you can download and use one of the cartoons under the **Photos** tab.

Join a Group / Add a Group

Groups are for people who want to focus on specific topics or who have specific interests.

Write a Blog

Every member of the ning can keep a blog. The ning's blog function may be an ideal way of keeping a record of these meetings.