

SHARPSCHOOL USER MANUAL

CHAPTER 9 BLOGS

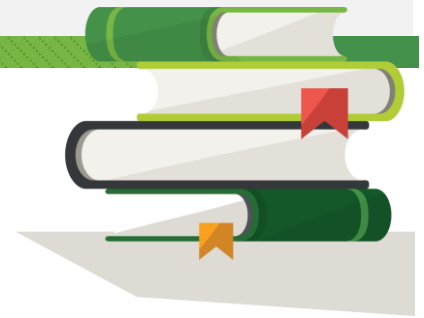


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1. Introduction

Over the years, **Blogs** have risen in popularity. By offering a robust communication method to exchange stories, news, opinion, and more. **Blogs** enable users to engage and receive feedback from an audience. There are a number of ways to utilize SharpSchool's **Blogs** for an educational setting. They include:



- I. **District-to-Community Communication:** Faculty and Administrators can create blog pages to discuss school, or class, related activities with the community.
- II. **Internal Discussions:** Teachers can set up blogs to carry out internal discussions with colleagues and students.
- III. **Student Blogs:** Students can participate in moderated blogs to discuss activities and class related projects.
- IV. **Event Blogs:** School committees can set up blogs to discuss past or upcoming events.

This guide will take you through the process of creating a blog, managing the database, and exploring some of the handier options available.

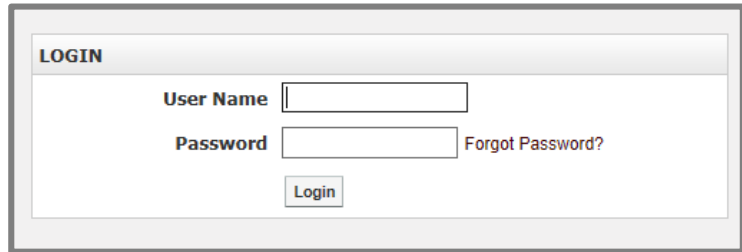
I. Blogs and Security: Something to Consider

SharpSchool's **Blogs** offer a safe and easy way for teachers and students to communicate with each other and the community. As such, understanding a blog's security protocols is a necessary step in getting the most out of the module. The most prevalent challenge for this kind of social medium is ensuring content is appropriate, filtered, and tracked.

By offering the tools teachers and administrators need to guarantee student safety, SharpSchool's blogging module facilitates constructive communication. Some of the most important security tools include user-based authentication, comment approvals, and the ability to filter comments by IP address. This manual will take you through each of these tools, serving as a valuable resource for blog authors to familiarize themselves with the security features.

II. Getting Started

To begin managing your blogs, you must first log onto your site using your **Username** and **Password**.

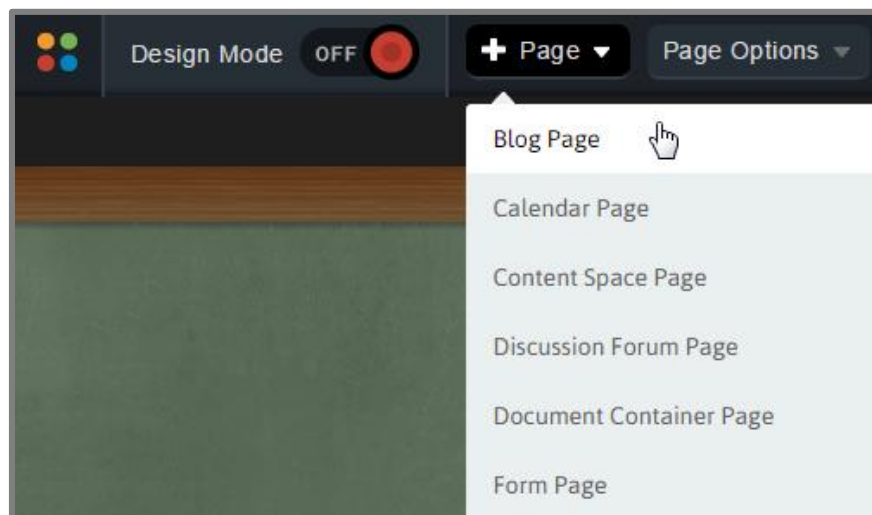


2. Adding a Blog Page



Reminder: Keep in mind that the **Administrative Tool Bar** at the top of the page is unique to the page you are currently viewing. You must first select the **Parent Page** from which you would like your **Blog** to link from.

- Step 1** Select the page you would like to connect the **Blog Page** to (this will be the Parent Page). Hover over **Page Options** on the **Administrative Toolbar** and select **Blog Page**.



- Step 2** The loaded page will prompt you for a **Title**. This will be the name displayed as a link on the **Parent Page**. In addition, you will be prompted to generate a **Name**. This will be the name generated for the web address. After providing a **Name**, there are several options you are presented with:
- Blog:** From here, you can select whether to create a new blog or link this blog to an existing one. When linking to an existing blog you will not be able to add posts until the administrator of that blog gives you authoring permissions.
 - Option:** This section gives you the ability to decide whether the blog opens in a new window or an existing one.

ADD BLOG PAGE

Title

Name

Blog

☒ Create a New Blog

☐ Link to an Existing Blog

Option

☒ Open the external link page in existing window

☐ Open the external link page in a new window

☐ Replace my profile blog link with this blog

Create Page Cancel

Step 3 Next you will be brought to the **Blog Dashboard** which has 5 main areas:

Area 1 – Title Area: This area is the central focus/description of your blog.

Area 2 – Recent Posts Preview: This area displays the most recent blog posts and a small preview of the blog's content.

Area 3 – Blog Administration: This section is visible only to the administrators of the blog. We will be returning to this area in the following section of this guide.

Area 4 – Recent Post Headlines: Provides links to recent blog posts.

Area 5 – Archives: A collection of previous blog entries sorted by date.

Area 6 – Group Blogs: An area dedicated to displaying other blogs grouped with yours.

Area 7 – Content Alert Subscription: Allows users to subscribe to RSS feeds from your blog.

The diagram illustrates the layout of a SharpSchool blog, divided into seven numbered areas:

- Area 1:** MATH BLOG header.
- Area 2:** The Math blog is designed to update students on any helpful news and information for their Mathematics courses.
- Area 3:** BLOG ADMINISTRATION header.
- Area 4:** Blog Summary (2 Posts, 1 Draft) and links for New Post and Blog Administration.
- Area 5:** RECENT POSTS header and a list of recent posts (Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics).
- Area 6:** ARCHIVES header and a list of archives (April 2014 (1)).
- Area 7:** GROUP BLOGS header and a list of group blogs (A History of Greatness, English Department Blog, English Department Blog (1), English Department Blog (2)).

Additional elements include a Content Alert Subscription section with links for Blog Feeds and Podcast Feeds, and a Note box stating: "Note: At any time, you can customize the Blog Sidebar."

3. Blog Administration

The **Blog Administration** field is reserved for back end functionality. This section of the module is divided into 6 main components:

- I. **Edit:** This is where you can change the name of blog.
- II. **Posts:** Create, edit, search, and view posts.
- III. **Comments:** View user comments with the ability to filter, search and remove anything you deem, or has been flagged as, inappropriate
- IV. **Post Categories:** Used to mark the category each blog post falls into for sorting and separation.
- V. **Configuration:** This section handles blog security, permissions, podcast licensing, and other configuration items specific to the blog.
- VI. **View Blog:** Provides a completed overview of the blog.

I. Edit

The **Edit Blog** tab allows you to rename the blog, include a description, or change the blog's template.

The screenshot displays the 'Edit Blog' interface. At the top, there is a horizontal tab bar with the following tabs: 'Edit', 'Posts', 'Comments', 'Post Categories', 'Configuration', and 'View Blog'. The 'Edit' tab is currently selected. Below the tabs, the main content area is titled 'BLOG DETAILS'. It contains a 'Blog Name' text input field with the value 'Math Blog'. Below this is a 'Description' section, which includes a rich text editor toolbar with icons for bold, italic, underline, link, unlink, list, and unlink. The description text reads: 'The Math blog is designed to update students on any helpful news and information for their Mathematics courses.' At the bottom of the 'BLOG DETAILS' section, there is a 'Theme' dropdown menu currently set to 'Group Blog'. In the bottom right corner of the interface, there are 'Update' and 'Cancel' buttons.

II. Posts

Edit

Posts

Comments

Post Categories

Configuration

View Blog


VIEW POSTS

Search

View All

POSTS (1-2 OF 2)

ADD POST

Title	Category	Date	Publish Status	Comment Status	Actions
Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics		4/22/2014	Published	Open	 

There are two important ways you can add a post to a blog; through the **Main** and **Blog Administration** interfaces.

a. Creating a New Post

Step 1 On the main interface of the blog page, select the **New Post** link on the upper right corner of the page.

Note: In addition, you may select the **Add Post** button in the **Blog Administration** interface.

Both options will take you to the editing interface of the blog, which is divided into two areas: **Create a New Post** and **Uploading Your Podcast**.

Step 2 Fill out details for the blog post. These include the **Post Title** (this title will be displayed on the blog page), the **Category** (divide your posts by topic and they can be grouped together for easy viewing), and the **Tags** (assign key words to make blogs easier to find).

CREATE A NEW POST

Post Title

Category

Tags

Post Body

Design HTML

☒ Accept comments

Step 3 Next, fill out the **Post Body** section of the page. This section utilizes the same basic editor used for producing content on other parts of the site. For a detailed explanation of the buttons in the editor, please refer to **Appendix A** of the **SharpSchool Documentation**.



Note: The **Accept Comments** field determines whether you wish to enable visitors to publish comments for your. Unchecking this box will prevent users from posting comments.

b. Uploading Your Podcast

In addition to publishing **Blogs**, SharpSchool's Blog module allows users to post podcasts. A podcast is an audio or video file made available for download or subscription through an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed.

To upload a podcast:

Step 1 Click **Browse** and select a file from your computer.


Step 2 Enter the desired title for your podcast in the **Podcast Title** area, and it will be displayed in the blog menu. For copyright purposes, it is important to indicate the **Podcast License** of your media file.

POSTS (1-2 OF 2)						ADD POST
Title	Category	Date	Publish Status	Comment Status	Actions	
Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics		4/22/2014	Published	Open		
The test		4/21/2014	Draft	Open		



Note: A Podcast License refers to the level of legal control you have over the podcast and the material found within. After the file is successfully uploaded, click **Post Now** if you want to post the podcast immediately or **Save As Draft** if you wish to complete the blog or publication at a later date.

c. Managing Posts

i. **Viewing Posts:** To view a post that has been created (Either in draft form or published), click the  icon.

ii. **Deleting a Post:** To delete a post click the  icon.



Note: Once you have deleted a post, it will no longer be available for viewing and any data within the post will no longer be available.

- iii. **Moderation:** Blog administrators can choose to set created posts to **Approved**, **Unapproved**, or **Rejected** status. Selecting **Approved** will change the **Publish Status** to **Published**, meaning that everyone will be able to see the post in the blog. Selecting **Unapproved** will change the **Publish Status** to **Unapproved**, and the post will not be visible on the blog; instead, it will only be viewable by a blog administrator in the **Posts** tab. Choosing **Rejected** prompts the blog administrator to provide a reason for the post's rejection, and then displays the **Publish Status** as **Rejected**.
- iv. **Comment Status:** Shows if the comment status is **Open** or **Closed**. An **Open** comment status indicates that the blog, or post, has comments enabled, while **Closed** indicates that commenting is disabled.
- v. **Publish Status:** Provides the blog administrator with the status of a post being **Published**, **Rejected** or **Unapproved**. For clarification on the **Publish Statuses**, please see their explanation above in the **Moderation** heading.
- vi. **Date:** When the post was created.
- vii. **Category:** Shows what category, if any, the author or administrator has designated to the blog or post.
- viii. **Title:** The **Title** of the blog post that will appear on other pages.

d. Editing a Post


If you need to edit a post after you have published it, you can do so by clicking on the name of the post. When you are finished making your changes, click **Post Now** to publish the blog.

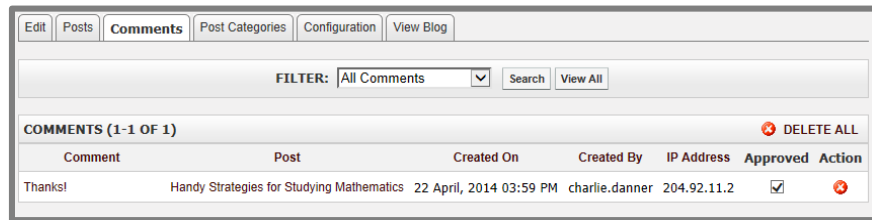
III. Managing Comments


Administrators can moderate comments made on **Blogs**. This tool is vital for an education setting; ensuring all content is validated and approved prior to publication.

The **Filter** dropdown allows you to filter comments by status, such as:

- All Comments:** This view displays all comments and is the default view of the Comments report.
- Unapproved:** Displays comments that have yet to be approved.
- Comment IP Address** – Allows for the search of comments by IP Address in order to find posts made from a particular computer.
- Comment Date:** Shows only comments made on a particular date.

You can authorize a comment to become public by checking it off in the **Approve** column. You can also delete comments by clicking on the  button in the **Action** column.



Comment	Post	Created On	Created By	IP Address	Approved	Action
Thanks!	Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics	22 April, 2014 03:59 PM	charlie.danner	204.92.11.2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

IV. Post Categories




Utilizing topical categories is useful when publishing blogs, since they make it easier for readers to find posts with specific subjects.


To create a new category for your blog:

Step 1 Type the name of the category in the **Category** field and click **Add**.

Step 2 Categories can either be **Public** or **Private**. A **Public** category is usable by every blog and a **Private** category is only usable by the current blog.



Category	Type	Action
Assignments	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Fun and Informative	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Math News	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Study Help	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	

Step 3 A category can be deleted by clicking the  button in the **Action** column on the right side of the screen.



Note: Deleting a category does not delete the posts tagged with it. Deleting blog posts can only be performed through the **Posts** tab in **Blog Administration**.

V. Blog Configuration

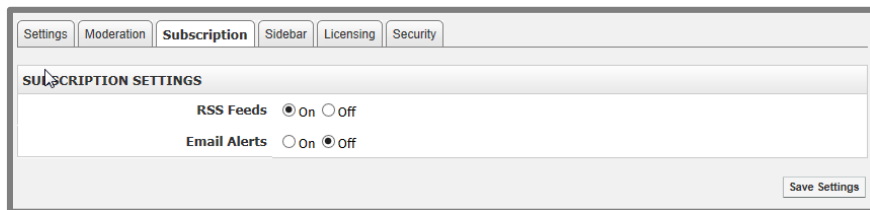
The **Configuration** tab contains all the housekeeping components for every element of the blog (such as RSS feeds, permissions, preferences, etc.) making it one of the most important parts of the **Blog Administration** console.

The **Configuration** tab is further broken into 6 main categories:

- a. RSS Feeds
- b. Security
- c. Settings
- d. Sidebar
- e. Licensing
- f. Moderation

a. Subscription

The **Subscription** tab allows for the activation, and deactivation, of RSS feeds and Email Alerts.



Note: It is recommended that **Post Titles** be used for blog RSS feeds since this will reduce the loading time for readers.

b. Security

The **Security** section of the blog is managed in the same manner as all other SharpSchool modules. There are three essential user roles for **Blogs**:

- i. **Administrator:** Users with complete control of the blog.
- ii. **Authors:** Users that can only co-author content for the blog.
- iii. **Browsers:** Any User who can view, and comment, on the blog, but cannot create any new blog posts.

Note: You must include the *Guest* user if you wish the blog to be public.

To add a user under a specific role, click the **Add** button, select the desired user in the popup window, click **Add** and then **OK**.

The screenshot shows the 'Configuration' tab in the SharpSchool interface. Under the 'Roles' sub-tab, there are three sections: 'Math Blog Administrators', 'Math Blog Authors', and 'Math Blog Browsers'. The 'Math Blog Administrators' section is expanded, showing a checkbox next to 'Charlie Danner (Charlie Danner)'. Below this checkbox are 'Add' and 'Remove' buttons. The 'Math Blog Authors' and 'Math Blog Browsers' sections are collapsed, indicated by plus signs.

Note: To remove a user, click **Remove** on the checkbox next to the name.

When selecting user permissions, it is important to keep in mind that there are two types of permission designations: **Direct Permissions** and **Actual Permissions**.

The screenshot shows a user selection popup window. It has two main panes: 'Groups (1 - 9 of 9)' on the left and 'Users (1 - 50 of 119)' on the right. The 'Groups' pane lists various roles like 'Administrative Staff', 'Administrators', 'GroupNames', 'Library', 'Parents', 'Registered Users', 'Staff', 'Students', and 'Teachers'. The 'Staff' group is selected. The 'Users' pane lists individual users, with 'Alberta Owens (Alberta Owens)' selected. Below these panes is a 'Selected Groups and Users (1)' section showing 'Charlie Danner (Charlie Danner)'. At the bottom right are 'Add', 'Remove', 'OK', and 'Cancel' buttons.

- i. **Direct Permissions** refers to users who also have access to your blog, as these may be inherited permissions from a parent page. You can add and remove users from the **Direct Permissions** button in the same manner as the **Roles**.
- ii. **Actual Permissions** refers to all the users, within the administrator's group, who have access to the blog. You cannot edit the users in the **Actual Permissions** list since this is controlled by site and/or global administrators.

c. Settings

With the **Settings** tab, administrators have the ability to make simple changes to the blog. This area is divided into 3 main sections:

- i. **General Settings:** Through here, **Email Notifications** can be switched on or off, the way time is displayed can be set in **Timestamp Format**, the **Locale** can be changed to **English** or **French**, and you can edit **Podcast Availability**.
- ii. **Post Display Settings:** You can configure the display parameters of posts on your blog.
- iii. **Comment Display Settings:** Controls the number of comments displayed at once, while the order of comments can be set to display **Oldest First** or **Newest First**.

The screenshot shows the 'Settings' tab selected. The 'GENERAL SETTINGS' section includes a 'Locale' dropdown set to 'English', a 'Timestamp Format' dropdown set to '2:35 PM', 'Email Notifications' with checkboxes for 'Notify all authors when there is a new post' (checked) and 'Notify post author when there is a new comment' (unchecked), and 'Podcast Availability' with radio buttons for 'Enabled' (selected) and 'Disabled'. The 'POSTS DISPLAY SETTINGS' section includes 'Posts to Display' (input field with '10'), 'Post Display Order' (radio buttons for 'Newest First' (selected) and 'Oldest First'), 'Post Summary Display Type' (radio buttons for 'HTML' (selected), 'Plain Text', and 'No Summary'), and 'Post Summary Length' (radio button for 'Full Post'). The 'COMMENTS DISPLAY SETTINGS' section includes 'Comments to Display' (radio buttons for 'All' (selected) and 'Recent' with an input field) and 'Comments Display Order' (radio buttons for 'Oldest First' and 'Newest First' (selected)). A 'Save Settings' button is located at the bottom right of the form.

iv. Blog Sidebar

Allowing for total control of the blog's sidebar items, this section allows users to select each option they desire to display.

SIDEBAR SETTINGS	
	Blog Name
Administration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recent Posts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tags	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Archives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Group Blogs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Post Categories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Content Alert Subscription	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Description	<input type="checkbox"/>

MATH BLOG

The Math blog is designed to update students on any helpful news and information for their Mathematics courses.

RECENT POSTS

Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics

Hey everyone, It's Mr. Danner here with some handy tips for you to remember when you are working on your math assignments this weekend.

Posted by Charlie Danner at 1:49 PM

BLOG ADMINISTRATION

Blog Summary

- 2 Posts, 1 Draft

[New Post](#)

[Blog Administration](#)

RECENT POSTS

- Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics

ARCHIVES

- April 2014 (1)

GROUP BLOGS

- A History of Greatness
- English Department Blog
- English Department Blog (1)
- English Department Blog (2)

More...

CONTENT ALERT SUBSCRIPTION

[Blog Feeds](#) [Podcast Feeds](#)

v. Licensing

The **Licensing** tab provides the definition of all the licensing options, control to select any of the desired licensing choices, as well as the option to assign a particular default license for all podcasts.

Settings
Moderation
Subscription
Sidebar
Licensing
Security

PODCAST LICENSE

License Name	Description
<input checked="" type="radio"/> No License	You do not care about license. Everyone can completely reuse and edit it.
<input type="radio"/> Copyright	This license lets you retain full copyright of your episodes, meaning others cannot legally remix, tweak, redistribute, or sell your episodes.
<input type="radio"/> Attribution	This license lets others distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon your episodes, even commercially, as long as they credit you for the original creation. This is the most accommodating of licenses offered, in terms of what others can do with your episodes licensed under Attribution. Attribution - No Derivatives This license allows for redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit to you.
<input type="radio"/> Attribution - Non-Commercial - No Derivatives	This license is the most restrictive of the six main Creative Commons licenses, allowing redistribution. This license is often called the 'free advertising' license because it allows others to download your episodes and share them with others as long as they mention you and link back to you, but they can't change them in any way or use them commercially.
<input type="radio"/> Attribution - Non-Commercial	This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your episodes non-commercially, and although their new works must also acknowledge you and be non-commercial, they don't have to license their derivative works on the same terms.
<input type="radio"/> Attribution - Non-Commercial - Share Alike	This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your episodes non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms. Others can download and redistribute your episodes just like the by-nc-nd license, but they can also translate, make remixes, and produce new stories based on your episodes. All new work based on yours will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also be non-commercial in nature.
<input type="radio"/> Attribution - Share Alike	This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your episodes even for commercial reasons, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms. This license is often compared to open source software licenses. All new works based on yours will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use.
<input type="radio"/> Attribution - No Derivatives	This license allows for redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit to you.

Save Settings

vi. Moderation

The **Moderation** tab allows you to assign blog moderators, specify whether approval is required for a post, and change the options for **Comment Moderation** (who can comment on the blog and if approval is required).

The screenshot shows the 'Moderation' tab in the SharpSchool settings. At the top, there are tabs for 'Settings', 'Moderation', 'Subscription', 'Sidebar', 'Licensing', and 'Security'. The 'Moderation' tab is active. Below the tabs, there are two main sections: 'POST MODERATION' and 'COMMENT MODERATION'. In the 'POST MODERATION' section, there are two radio buttons for 'Post Moderation': 'No approval required' (selected) and 'Hold posts for approval'. Below this is a text input field for 'Moderator(s)' with a user icon on the right. A note below the field states: '(All moderators will be automatically granted full control to this blog. Please note that when you remove a moderator you may need to modify their privileges in the security section.)'. The 'COMMENT MODERATION' section has two radio buttons for 'Comment Availability': 'No one is allowed to comment', 'Only registered users may comment', and 'All users may comment' (selected). Below this is a 'Moderation' section with two radio buttons: 'No approval required' (selected) and 'Hold comments for approval'. At the bottom right, there is a 'Save Settings' button.

VI. View Blog

This tab provides a complete and comprehensive overview of the blog including: recent posts, the administration panel, tags, and RSS Feed information.

The screenshot shows the 'View Blog' interface for a blog titled 'MATH BLOG'. The main content area on the left displays the blog's description: 'The Math blog is designed to update students on any helpful news and information for their Mathematics courses.' Below this is a 'RECENT POSTS' section featuring a post titled 'Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics' by 'Charlie Danner' at '1:49 PM' with '1 Comment'. The right sidebar contains several sections: 'BLOG ADMINISTRATION' with a 'Blog Summary' showing '2 Posts, 1 Draft' and '1 Comment', and links for 'New Post' and 'Blog Administration'; 'RECENT POSTS' listing 'Handy Strategies for Studying Mathematics'; 'ARCHIVES' showing 'April 2014 (1)'; 'GROUP BLOGS' listing 'A History of Greatness', 'English Department Blog', 'English Department Blog (1)', and 'English Department Blog (2)'; and 'CONTENT ALERT SUBSCRIPTION' with links for 'Blog Feeds' and 'Podcast Feeds'.