

# Flat Classroom Project Creates Globally Minded Students at YCIS Beijing



Released on: March 04, 2011, 12:48 pm

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Industry: [Education](#), [Internet & Online](#)

**(Beijing)** -- Once a week, Coco Yu walks into her Year 4 classroom at Yew Chung International School of Beijing (YCIS Beijing), logs onto a computer and starts communicating with other children her age who are located in schools stretching from England to India.



Yu is one of dozens of students at YCIS Beijing who are participating in a global collaborative project that joins together primary students from around the world via the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies, including Wikispaces and Ning, an online service that allows members to create social networks.

The project is called Flat Classroom. It is part of an emerging trend in internationally aware schools, like YCIS Beijing, that embrace a holistic and full-rounded educational approach to work collaboratively with

others around the world in order to create students who are competitive and globally-minded. One of the main goals of the project is to “flatten” or lower the classroom walls so that two or more classes are joined virtually to become one large classroom.

“In Flat Classroom, we work a lot with computers and we go to Wiki, and we type what we do in Beijing. Maybe we Skype, and we talk to other children around the world, for example, we have a school in Mumbai, a school in England and Mill Creek and the US,” Yu, who is 9 years old, said.

YCIS Beijing teachers who take part in the program say they can immediately see the perceptions of their students about the world and their place in it change as a result of participation in the project, which incorporates themes and lesson plans from “The World is Flat,” a ground-breaking book authored by the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. Students also work collaboratively on projects with their peers located in different schools around the world. On February 21st at 8am, students used Skype to video chat with the primary students and parents at a US primary school who were attending their back-to-school night. It was an exciting link for both primary classes involved who exclaimed cheers when the video connection occurred, followed by a question and answer period that bounced back-and-forth between time zones.

“Of course, students have discovered similarities between themselves and other students located at the other participating schools,” said Primary Year 4 teacher, Heather Davis.

“They also note the differences as well. It is through these similarities and differences that our students have expressed the most learning. They find it fascinating that the same hobbies, food or entertainment enjoyed by them is enjoyed by other students as well. Conversely, they are intrigued by the holidays and traditions of different countries and are surprised when preconceived notions they had about other countries are challenged and clarified with reality.”

[The Flat Classroom Project](#) is incorporated mostly during IT time at YCIS Beijing but also crosses over into other subject areas, including English, math, history and Chinese. Students, for example, learn how to correspond in English with their counterparts in different countries or study the history of the countries in which their peers are living.

From February 25 - 27, a special Flat Classroom Conference will be held in Beijing. It will include students and educators discussing the future of education through the integration of technologies, including wikis, blogs, social networking and multi-media storytelling, into learning environments.

### **About Flat Classroom**

The Flat Classroom Project is a global collaborative project that joins together middle and senior high school students. The project was co-founded by Vicki Davis (Westwood Schools, USA) and Julie Lindsay (Beijing (BISS) International School, China) in 2006. The Flat Classroom Project 2006 is featured in Chapter 13, 'If it's not happening it's because you're not doing it', of the latest edition of Thomas Friedman's book, 'The World is Flat' upon which it was based. One of the main goals of the project is to 'flatten' or lower the classroom walls so that instead of each class working isolated and alone, 2 or more classes are joined virtually to become one large classroom. This is done through the Internet using Web 2.0 tools such as Wikispaces and Ning.

Additional sister projects to the Flat Classroom Project include the Horizon Project, and its replacement since 2009 the Net Generation Education Project, created in conjunction with Don Tapscott and 'Grown Up Digital', based on the Horizon Report released annually by New Media Consortium and Educause; the Digiteen Project with the aim of promoting better online citizenship through research and discussion culminating in each school taking action within their own community to promote this; and Eracism, a global student debate that includes a virtual world component.

### **About Yew Chung International School Beijing**

Located in the scenic Honglingjin Park in the heart of downtown Beijing, Yew Chung International School of Beijing celebrates 15 years of educating students of the city's expatriate community. [YCIS Beijing](#) is a fully accredited school by CIS, NEASC and NCCT, and is part of the Yew Chung Education Foundation with over 5,000 students across campuses in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Chongqing, Qingdao and Silicon Valley (USA). Providing Beijing's expatriate community a [quality education](#) across a broad spectrum ranging from early childhood to senior secondary education, the school offers a unique richness and diversity of both Eastern and Western cultures that equip students to be bilingual, academically competitive, caring and globally-minded individuals. For more information, visit [www.ycis-bj.com](http://www.ycis-bj.com).

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