

CHAPTER 1



Flattening Classrooms through Global Collaboration

"We need to educate the 'net generation' differently not so much because 'they' are different, but because the world is different."

DR. ERIC BRUNSELL, College of Education and Human Services,
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, May 3, 2009, in an email to the NetGenEd™ project



ERIC BRUNSELL

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In the words of Edgar, an Ethiopian student who came to the inaugural Flat Classroom™ Conference in Qatar, 2009:

What the Flat Classroom is really about . . . [is] connecting and bridging different people and different communities. . . . Learning is not necessarily about learning one plus one, it is about different cultures and learning about the world as a whole. I think it's really important and it helps to make the world more of a global village.¹

Students also want to make their decisions about one another based on experience rather than media observations. Steve Ramos, from Houston, Texas (another student at the first conference in Qatar), says:

One thing that really annoys me is when people would react hysterically when I told them I was going to Qatar.

They would say ignorant things like “Ooh, you better take a gun” or “Ooh, hopefully you don’t get bombed.” And that completely made me mad. I just hate the fact that people are completely blinded by the media and in some ways it sickens me.²

When Edgar and Steve met face-to-face, their world views changed. They are not unique. Many of us are finding that students become more open-minded about people from other countries and cultures by simply meeting online. It is not necessary to get on a plane and go to physical places when they can meet on the level plane of online social media spaces. In the words of Miller, a U.S. student in the 2009 Flat Classroom Project (FCP),

I hope to obtain a great knowledge about the flattening of the world through the Flat Classroom Project. I would like to learn what it takes to flatten the world, and the tools that I need to help flatten it. I am excited about getting to make videos about the topics that are contributing factors in the flattening of the world today. I am also eager to meet new people from different countries and get their views on the world and how it is becoming more technologically advanced. I am very excited about the Flat Classroom Project. I am excited to start making a difference.³

As evidenced in Miller’s words, students feel that they are “meeting” each other when they network in educational spaces. These meetings can be transformative. Students also want to make a difference. These are two of the cornerstones behind the necessity for global collaboration in education.

A GREAT EDUCATION INCLUDES GLOBAL COLLABORATION



tweetable

21st-century skills harness not only the power of technology but the power of people. #flatclass

We believe effective use of technology can build bridges between classrooms, nations, and humankind, and that 21st century skills harness not only the power of technology but the power of people. We need this connection for the future of our planet. It is no longer an option. Students are the greatest textbook ever written for one another and will be travelers on this bridge.



The Flat Classroom Project is not merely a curricular add-on opportunity for my students. It is an outright necessity in embracing the changes occurring in our world today and as teachers, we are tasked with the challenge of preparing our students for jobs that do not yet exist. The students we teach are the visionaries that will lead my own child someday. Through FCP, my students are not simply learning about cultural diversity, they are living it and doing it. I have witnessed, firsthand, cultural barriers broken and stereotypes disproved through the life-changing Flat Classroom Conference. Unique in its own right, the FCP not only provides a constructivist, collaborative and authentic learning environment, it also provides multiple venues for the celebration of student learning, which is a key element many other projects fail to actualize. I participate repeatedly in this project because of the profound impact it has on many of my students’ futures.



ADD FRIEND

SUZIE NESTICO

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SUZIE NESTICO,
Teacher, Mt. Carmel Area School District,
Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, Keystone Technology Integrator 2009, personal email

CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ARE UNDERPREPARED TO COLLABORATE



I scribbled down four words in my notebook: “The world is flat.” As soon as I wrote them, I realized that this was the underlying message of everything that I had seen and heard in Bangalore in two weeks of filming. The global competitive playing field was being leveled. The world was being flattened.⁴

THOMAS FRIEDMAN,
The World Is Flat

Many educators mistakenly view **global collaboration** as an “extra.” But visionary educators realize that global collaboration is *not* a curriculum topic but an approach to pedagogy.⁵ Using technology, jobs in one country can now easily be **outsourced** (or **offshore outsourced**) to another. When one calls a customer support number, that call can be routed anywhere. The only requirement is that the location have access to high-speed Internet. Global competition for jobs means that today’s students must not only be well-educated, creative problem solvers but they must also be equipped to collaborate globally.

Those who wish to be successful must also understand the laws, privacy, etiquette, literacies, and habits of learning that go along with being an effective **digital citizen** of the information era. Research shows that technology plays a key role in succeeding in business, with the ability to connect, network, and collaborate being essential skills.⁶ Some people believe that these students who have technological ability at their fingertips just have a natural affinity to “get technology.” This simply is not so.

As demonstrated in our digital citizenship model in Chapter 5, technology access and awareness are advantageous starting points. However, being fluent in collaborative people skills online and offline is needed as well. For example, most students in the United States, according to research, are underprepared to work in collaborative teams when they finish high school.⁷ The world needs people who can collaborate and collaboration should start as part of the school curriculum beginning in the early years.

LEARNING IS SOCIAL

Learning is a social experience that can be enhanced with **social networking** tools and Web 2.0 technologies. Findings from the *Digital Youth Project: Living and Learning with New Media* tell us that youth currently engage in peer-based, self-directed learning online.⁸

Although adults can be influential in setting learning goals and in functioning as role models, the use of **new media** by youth allows them to learn from their peers. Recent research by the Cisco Learning Network also supports the power of **peer-to-peer learning**. Cisco found that in the case of IT professionals, peer-to-peer learning is necessary and just as important as knowledge coming from the instructor.⁹

According to Steve Hargadon, an expert in social media in education and the founder of *Classroom 2.0* (an **educational network** of over 50,000 educators), the impact of Web 2.0 has changed people’s relationships to information and extended personal learning opportunities.¹⁰ Educational networking can minimize isolation in learning and create powerful learning conduits between students.



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tweetable

Peer-to-peer learning is necessary and just as important as knowledge coming from the instructor. #flatclass
<http://tinyurl.com/ciscoreserach>

In the Flat Classroom Projects which typically studies technology topics, we see forum posts on topics about novels, history, and other subjects considered to be “core” and not traditionally considered targets for technology integration. Students want to learn from their peers and make learning social! This inclination toward social learning occurs any time we connect students for academic purposes.

The traditional classroom that exists as a distinct entity with one teacher and a group of students can no longer close the door on the world. In fact, a new learning landscape has evolved where responsibility for curriculum, content, and learning is equally shared among all learners (teachers and students).

SHARING UNLOCKS UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

More than enhancing learning, sharing provides great benefits for those who know how to do it properly. Findings by a Metiri Classroom Collaboration study tell us that engagement, pro-school attitudes, and increased achievement are some of the benefits of students working together.¹¹

The school where one of the authors (Vicki Davis) teaches received several grants because the teachers have shared what they are doing on their YouTube channel and through Facebook. In fact, this book is a product of the fact that we authors have shared freely much of what we have done via our blogs in a way that has attracted the interest of our publisher, Pearson Education.

ENHANCING EDUCATION WITH CLASSROOM COLLABORATION

Collaboration is working together with one or more others. In a global sense, boundaries are abstract,¹² and more so now that instant publication via wiki, blog, or Facebook is bringing people together from geographically dispersed areas onto common websites.

The aim of global collaboration in education is to improve learning, break down classroom walls, and develop authentic audiences.¹³ A global collaborative classroom is able to connect, collaborate, and create products or artifacts with other classrooms anywhere in the world. Furthermore, the use of Web 2.0 has given us a whole new focus and meaning for *global collaboration* by providing collaborative tools that connect and support asynchronous and synchronous work.

DEFINING THE GLOBAL COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

A classroom following Flat Classroom project concepts is a classroom that connects and engages with multiple audiences, resources, and tools to create authentic, collaborative learning outcomes. Project outcomes in a variety of media—such as videos, slide shows, presentations, and wikis—add to learning and become part of the **personal learning network (PLN)** of a variety of audiences. These projects and their outcomes also leave a legacy for those who participate. The best projects continually improve by using community input to allow best practices and best learning resources to emerge.

Students can now have a partner in the desk next to them, in India, in China, or elsewhere. Unfortunately, those students who have not collaborated with students in other parts of the world are not going to experience a level playing field after school. Instead, they risk being unable to “speak the language” of communication and collaboration on an international scale, especially if they do not have access to technology tools at home.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills cites “Collaboration Skills” as an essential skill for students.¹⁴ The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)¹⁵ also includes collaboration as an essential standard for students and teachers.

The standards are there. It is time to stop the debate. The walls of the classroom must come down. Well-educated students will immerse in collaborative learning experiences with their peers across the globe.

Knowing how to connect and communicate using “flattened” nonhierarchical methods enabled by the Internet is an essential skill for the 21st century professional and student. This is how the Flat Classroom project started. Without any “official” organizing body behind it, the comment from author Julie Lindsay in Figure 1.1 on Vicki Davis’s blog was enough of a spark to ignite the flame of their first collaboration.¹⁶ As a “flat” author, Thomas Friedman, author of *The World Is Flat*, emailed Julie, (Figure 1.2) after finding out about the first Flat Classroom project via her blog.

Flattening means more than just connecting students. It advocates connecting authors, experts, and people throughout the world with common interests. Students who miss out on global collaboration opportunities may just be missing out on their future.

21st CENTURY SKILLS

C21 LEARNING AND INNOVATION SKILLS:
Communication and Collaboration

ISTE STANDARDS

NETS.T 3
Model Digital-Age Work and Learning

NETS.S 2
Communication and Collaboration

FIGURE 1.1 Comment from Julie Lindsay to Vicki’s Blog on Friedman’s *The World Is Flat*

JULIE LINDSAY

inbox
 reply
 spam
 delete
 10/13/2006

Vicki,

I am also discussing *The World Is Flat* with my senior IT class. I have some resources on our wiki page at <http://itgs.wikispaces.com/The+World+Is+Flat>. This is part of our globalization and cultural diversity topic. The streamed video from MIT is useful as Friedman gives a good overview of his position. It would be great if we could interact with your students! Would you be willing/have the time to participate in an online debate or discussion? my students are Bangladeshi and Indian nationals and have a perspective from the “other side of the flat world” ;-)

Have a look at our class blog as well at <http://itgsforum.blogspot.com> for recent activity etc. and an overview of the online debate from last year with a school in Melbourne, Australia.

FIGURE 1.2 Email to Julie from Thomas Friedman

TOM FRIEDMAN

inbox
 reply
 spam
 delete
 11/27/2006

Dear Julie,

I read your blog about the flat world classroom. I was delighted to see it! Tell me how it goes. Yes, this is really Tom Friedman. Allbest, Tom



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C21 INTERDISCIPLINARY THEME:
 Global Awareness



NETS.2.c
 Communication and
 Collaboration



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THE GLOBAL COLLABORATIVE MINDSET

Too often, schools treat connections with the outside world as a nice bonus or filler activity, rather than part of the core mission of a school in the 21st century. Executive Director of iEARN-USA Ed Gragert, who has worked for years to link U.S. classrooms with international partners, says that school cultures must change so that international interaction and collaboration are valued.¹⁷

In 1976, Edward T. Hall compared culture to an iceberg, having internal and external parts. We have to dig deeper than the picture in a textbook or a video to fully understand our global neighbors because “the only way to learn the internal culture of others is by actively participating in their culture.”¹⁸

“The enrichment comes from working with other people who have a completely different culture from one’s own. A casual remark or gesture in one country may be deeply offensive, or at least questionable, in another. It is good that young people have the opportunity to make mistakes before doing so in a situation that could have grave and lasting consequences!” says Terry Freedman, ICT leader in the United Kingdom and Flat Classroom advisor since the first project. (For a full case study from Terry, see the end of this chapter.)

Implementing well-constructed and supported global projects can promote **global awareness** and deeper knowledge of culture than provided in a textbook. Global collaboration should be integrated at every level and in every course to engage students in the benefits of community learning and to instill a globally aware mindset while supporting **global competency** objectives.

WHAT DOES A GLOBAL COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM LOOK LIKE?



In January 2007, one of my students talked about my global project and said, “I really liked the use of blogs and forums for this project. It really keeps everyone connected even outside of school.” This, to me, is an essential component of what makes a classroom great!

Learning used to be confined to the walls around a classroom. Except for the occasional field trip, guest speaker, or video, teaching and learning was defined by the limitations of the classroom space.

Now, the world is our classroom! Our teachers are teachers, students, authors, experts, and parents with whom we have the potential to work when we tear down the walls and open our classrooms to a flat world—where learning has no limits other than the ones we impose ourselves.

Do not go quietly into your classroom. Engage. Be brave!¹⁹

DAVID TRUSS,
 Principal, Dalian Maple Leaf Foreign Nationals School

Students in this environment are taught to be effective digital citizens. Culturally aware, technology-savvy students can contribute and collaborate in meaningful ways as they interact with many different audiences. Given choices of technological tools, they can communicate using audio, video, still photos, or text.

In the modern collaborative classroom project, classes typically “fan out” to cover a subject. With each student having a slightly different research focus, the

“jigsaw” of a larger topic comes together as students share learning with each other. The goal is often the creation of rich multimedia and collaborative artifacts that promote higher-order thinking skills and problem solving.

Learning experiences are celebrated as students present and share in online spaces what they have learned. At times, students may be **reverse mentors**²⁰ for the adults who participate. True global collaboration improves students’ understanding and acceptance of one another and produces students who can think and process the overwhelming amount of information in their rapidly changing world.

WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE GLOBAL COLLABORATIVE PROJECT?

Friedman talks about “**glocalization**” as a “think global, act local” skill that will improve economic advantage.²¹ However, in true educational global collaboration, “glocalization” is maintaining local identity in culture and lifestyle while learning about other lifestyles and cultures. An effective global collaborative project is an educational project that flattens or joins classrooms and people from geographically dispersed places within a technology infrastructure built for a common curricular purpose. Interactions foster cultural understanding and global awareness in the process of learning. Local identity is maintained and celebrated.

THE EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

But aren’t we already collaborating globally in the classroom? The concept and practice of global collaboration in the classroom has changed since the development of the Internet. Because of the evolution of tools and Internet speed, we can build a taxonomy that shows an evolution of global collaboration in the classroom (see Table 1.1).

Global Collaboration 1.0. When the possibilities of the Internet emerged in the mid-1990s, astute educators started to reach out and explore collaboration possibilities



TABLE 1.1 Evolution of Global Collaboration

Stage	Connection Speed	Connection Frequency	Type of Connection	Content
Global Collaboration 1.0	Slow	Intermittent	Classroom to classroom	Information exchange
Global Collaboration 2.0	Faster	Intermittent or ongoing	Classroom to classroom; Some student to student through low-bandwidth means	Information and artifact exchange
Global Collaboration 3.0	Faster	Ongoing	Classroom to classroom and student to student	Information exchange and artifact co-creation

**Global School House**

<http://www.globalschoolnet.org>

ePals

<http://www.epals.com>

iEARN Learning Circles

<http://www.iearn.org/circles>

Cyberfair

<http://www.globalschoolnet.org/gsnct/index.cfm>

Shout

<http://shoutlearning.org>

DeforestACTION

<http://deforestation.org>

around the world. The term *telecommunications* became common and “tele-awards” were issued by companies such as AT&T and the Global SchoolNet.²² Global collaboration 1.0 generally takes the form of:

- Individual classroom work with some commonalities with partner(s)
- Some sharing via an online website or email
- Coordination by a central body (e.g., Global SchoolNet or ePals)
- Some minimal interaction between participants
- Low-level use of technology and online tools for interaction, but often an opportunity for students to develop web authoring or multimedia skills
- Teacher-directed learning

Global Collaboration 2.0. With expanded Internet speeds and improved technology tools, educators realize the usefulness of online collaborative work by using technology as a scaffold. This stage sees:

- Classrooms getting to know other classes
- Connections and interactions (synchronous and/or asynchronous) that are more common and planned
- Working toward a shared goal (e.g., iEARN Learning Circles)
- Some possible experimentation with Web 2.0 tools
- Teacher-directed learning, with some student independence and connections

Global Collaboration 3.0. At this level, there are high expectations for connectivity and communication. Teachers and students are on the same level and with the focus on student-centered learning. This includes:

- More emphasis on products that are “co-created” and multimedia rich; actions taken by students to make a difference in their immediate or extended community
- Fully engaged teachers who communicate and collaborate online with all participants
- Use of social media tools for communication and interaction
- Classrooms merged into one to study a theme/project, to share research, and to pursue common learning objectives
- High expectations for student and teacher engagement with collaborative expectations (It is not enough to email once a week!)
- Extended community partners (other educators, experts, peers)
- Individual or class/school-based output or products with increasing interdependence on students in other classrooms (outsourcing) for final outcomes
- Teacher- and/or student-initiated collaborations, student-centered learning

The newer forms of global collaboration are about the development of educational networks, finding like-minded people, sharing ideas, and receiving cooperation from different parts of the world. Students work as a team and classrooms work as a single classroom, sharing a pedagogical approach. Friendships and trust relationships emerge with others via online communication rather than face to face.

Room for All Types of Collaboration. Although today's high-speed Internet makes global collaboration 3.0 possible, all levels of collaboration exist in today's schools and have their uses. It should be the goal that before a student goes to college, he or she should participate in projects with 3.0 characteristics. There are, however, uses for all types of global collaboration, and all forms can be transformational. Simple classroom-to-classroom sharing is powerful, but due to time constraints and connectivity requirements, 3.0 may not be possible for all schools.

THE CHALLENGES OF EMBEDDING GLOBAL COLLABORATION

GOING BEYOND THE "WOW!"

Although the so-called hook for many classrooms is the "Wow" of meeting and learning with others who are not face-to-face in the same room, the aim is to make this mode of working common so that "unflat" classrooms become extinct.

There are obstacles to the global collaborative classroom, however. It can be work for teachers to integrate new projects into the curriculum, and it can also be intimidating for students. It can also be an uncomfortable new way for students to learn, especially if a student thrives in the test-based environment.

Despite obstacles, global collaboration in the classroom is a win-win situation. When students are provided choices for learning, we can reach more of them. Students also win when they have interactions that are meaningful and that support authentic problem solving. Teachers know students will be ready to collaborate again after the students learn how the first time. They will have developed lifetime skills. Teachers can also lead the way through modeling good collaboration.

ENGAGING LEARNERS AND LEADERS

In order for students to be fully engaged, teachers must also be engaged. In Julie's experience with her class in Bangladesh, the first students to complete both Flat Classroom and Horizon projects struggled with communication issues, collaboration difficulties, and cultural differences.²³ This new global collaboration enthralled them but, at the same time, the students expressed concerns, wondering if the extra effort was "worth it." This is typical. Many teachers express similar concerns, and have to balance the time needed for enhanced engagement with existing demands on their classroom.

SHIFTING TRADITIONAL PEDAGOGIES

The walls break down when students are part of an inclusive global classroom where expert advisors and peer-group review become a common occurrence, and where the ability to reach out and create friendships with those they *want* to learn with is a reality. Learning globally includes making a difference to the world.



tweetable

Go beyond the "Wow." Embed global collaboration practice into everyday learning so that "unflat" classrooms become extinct. #flatclass



ISTE STANDARDS

NETS.T 1.d
Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity



tweetable

Learning globally includes making a difference to the world. #flatclass

Instead of “lesson plans,” many who are collaborating globally create **project plans**. These plans include two things: common deliverables for all students and flexibility for individual teachers to customize other parts of the project to suit the particular needs of their classroom. Some authentic research projects are followed up with action projects, in which students take action based on their learning. The use of social media allows students to have an impact on global issues with creativity and hard work. Student voices can be heard.

HAVING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Learning is not one-size-fits-all, nor does it happen in isolation. Does everyone like geography? Does everyone like mathematics? No! The same can be said for local versus global collaboration (or, for that matter, group work as opposed to working alone). Not everybody likes the same thing. No one method will ever suit all learning styles, so diversity of delivery and audience will help us engage more learners with content.

A LOOK AT THE PROJECTS

The principles in this book may be applied to any age and any subject, including postsecondary education and professional development learning opportunities. Throughout this book we will mention various projects created by the authors and many others.

To give you an overview of the projects in this book we have outlined the Flat Classroom projects. These projects are not meant to be prescriptive, because global collaboration will evolve tremendously in the years to come; however, these descriptions will give you context for where we are now.

THE FLAT CLASSROOM PROJECT

The Flat Classroom project allows upper middle and high school levels to study and explore emerging trends and “flatteners” in our world as discussed in Thomas Friedman’s book *The World Is Flat*. Students learn about technology trends in a project designed to let them experience those same trends firsthand.

There are two main components: a collaborative group **wiki** and a personal video. Grouped in cross-school teams, students conduct **authentic research** and collaboratively edit a wiki on their topic. They can more closely connect with partners on the project’s social network through forums, blogs, a live chat, and message walls. Educators, business leaders, or preservice teachers serve as expert advisors on the wikis.

The personal video is a response to the research from a specific creative perspective. Using one of the **six senses of the conceptual age** from Dan Pink’s *A Whole New Mind*,²⁴ a student may tell her or his story using the first-person voice, or another one of the six “senses.” Students outsource a section of their video to another student in another classroom. This makes them not just participants studying the forces that make the world flat, but rather those who have lived it. Educators serve as judges to determine the top videos in an awards program at the end of the project. At the

ISTE STANDARDS

If implemented as designed, this project meets all ISTE NETS standards.

21st CENTURY SKILLS

If implemented as designed, this project meets all C21 standards with various students having different aspects of the interdisciplinary themes based on their research topics.



FLAT CLASSROOM™ FRAMEWORK

NAME OF PROJECT: Flat Classroom Project

WEBSITE URL: <http://www.flatclassroomproject.net>

TWITTER NAME: @flatclassroom

LOCATION: The World

COMMUNICATION: Technopersonal; asynchronous and synchronous

GENERATION: Contemporaries; interactions with older and younger generation

INFORMATION: Students construct personal learning networks (PLNs) to encompass all areas of the learning pathway

LEARNING LEGACY: Public wiki, blogs, and videos; recorded student summits posted online

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AREA OF UNDERSTANDING

Safety, Privacy, Copyright, and Legal
Etiquette and Respect
Habits of Learning
Literacy and Fluency



conclusion of the project, students report their reflections on postproject blog posts and student summits in the online presentation room.

We break down this project further in Chapter 10 as we dissect the anatomy of global collaborative project design.



But in the end the dominant focus was not the technologies, or the educational standards; it was the power of the Flat Classroom projects to foster student-centered, student-empowered, student-connected, student-responsible, authentic learning. Student-centered in that students were allowed to be the managers of their own learning. Student-empowered where students forged new relationships. Student-connected in that they worked with people they had not physically met. Student-responsible, it was always apparent who was contributing (and who was not). And authentic in that materials such as the Horizon Report and *The World Is Flat* spoke directly to the students and the world they faced.

JOHN TURNER,

Flat Classroom project teacher, Head of Educational Technology, Canadian International School, Hong Kong
(See a full case study from John at the end of this chapter.)



JOHN TURNER

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THE DIGITEEN PROJECT

The Digiteen™ project is a global hands-on project for middle and early high school students. The purpose of the project is to teach and promote effective digital citizenship and responsible online choices. This project studies digital citizenship with students researching current digital citizenship topics and writing a collaborative report on a wiki using the citizenship model shared in Chapter 5 of this book. Using a live social network experience to underpin their research, students experience the technologies they are studying.

After the research, students create action-based educational projects to promote effective digital citizenship, typically at their local schools. This makes the project a representation of Friedman's concept of "glocalization" in that issues that affect digital life and learning are explored and discussed globally, with students taking



The research phase of the project meets ISTE NETS 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. If the teacher allows students to create their own action project instead of creating an assignment for them, it also meets NETS.S 1.



All C21 student standards except creativity. If the teacher allows the students to design their own action project, creativity is also met.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AREA OF UNDERSTANDING

Safety, Privacy, Copyright, and Legal Etiquette and Respect
 Habits of Learning
 Literacy and Fluency



NAME OF PROJECT: Digiteen Project

WEBSITE URL: <http://www.digiteen.org>

TWITTER NAME: @digiteen

LOCATION: The World and Inner Circle (depending on the action project)

COMMUNICATION: Technopersonal; asynchronous, synchronous

GENERATION: Contemporaries; typically action projects include presentations to the younger generation

INFORMATION: Students construct PLNs to encompass all areas of the learning pathway

LEARNING LEGACY: public wiki documenting research and action projects

leadership back in their local community to implement an action. Service learning, “combining classroom instruction with community service to address community needs,”²⁵ is powerful learning.

THE NETGENED™ (NET GENERATION EDUCATION) PROJECT

This project has been created by the Flat Classroom project team and highly regarded author Don Tapscott. The first NetGenEd project was announced at Flat Classroom Conference 2009 when Tapscott was brought in via Skype to talk to the educator and student participants. In this project, students study the results of the annual Horizon Report²⁶ (written collaboratively by the New Media Consortium²⁷ and Educause²⁸) and relate them to the characteristics of their generation (called NetGen) from Tapscott’s book *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World*.

Like the Flat Classroom project, students create a collaborative research report via wiki and a personal video. However, in this project, some students assume roles



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@dtapscott

<http://www.dontapscott.com>



If implemented as designed this project meets all ISTE NET.S standards.



If implemented as designed, this project meets all C21 standards with different students having different aspects of the interdisciplinary themes based on their research topics.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AREA OF UNDERSTANDING

Safety, Privacy, Copyright, and Legal Etiquette and Respect
 Habits of Learning
 Literacy and Fluency



NAME OF PROJECT: NetGenEd Project

WEBSITE URL: <http://www.netgened.org>

TWITTER NAME: @netgened

LOCATION: The World

COMMUNICATION: Technopersonal; asynchronous and synchronous

GENERATION: Contemporaries; interactions with older generation

INFORMATION: Students construct PLNs to encompass all areas of the learning pathway, including the social network and wiki

LEARNING LEGACY: Public wiki, blogs, videos; recorded student summits posted online.

such as **project manager** (PM), assistant project manager (APM), and editors of the various wikis, and therefore student-manage this project. PMs and APMs report weekly to teachers via a survey form to keep everyone apprised of any issues that teachers need to address (such as noncontribution).

After compiling their wiki reports based on current research and encouraged by “expert advisors” (subject matter experts in the industry, as well as other educators), students then create a personal video or multimedia artifact. Similar to the Flat Classroom project, international teams of educators judge the final videos and present awards during an online ceremony.

THE ERACISM PROJECT™

The Eracism Project was the winning project concept by a student team from the inaugural 2009 Flat Classroom Conference held in Doha, Qatar.²⁹ The project was designed to open possibilities for understanding and realizing solutions to the world’s problems through debate. Postconference, we joined with a team of educators, including debate expert Bernajeane Porter, to create the project as a global debate using asynchronous tools.

Using Voicethread, schools competed in a double-elimination debate on the topic “Differences Make Us Stronger.” The final debate was held online in a virtual world (ReactionGrid using Open Sim) with audience members voting on the winners.

“A WEEK IN THE LIFE . . .”: ELEMENTARY FLAT CLASSROOM PROJECT

In this elementary school project, classrooms join globally to explore what life is like in each country and their respective schools through online discussion and real-time linkups where possible. In a short period of time all classrooms collect multimedia, as agreed in their teams, and share this with a view to co-creating artifacts using the collective material. Students build an online learning community as they collaborate



FLAT CLASSROOM™ FRAMEWORK

NAME OF PROJECT: The Eracism Project

WEBSITE URL: <http://www.eracismproject.org>

TWITTER NAME: @eracismproject

LOCATION: Four schools, none of which is yours; potential for worldwide

COMMUNICATION: Asynchronous debates until the finals

GENERATION: Debate with contemporaries; feedback from older generation

INFORMATION: Teachers as coaches, research is independent by classroom; no common social network or wiki except for debate resources

LEARNING LEGACY: Debates recorded to share with others on Voicethread



BERNAJEANE PORTER
 @bernajeanporter
<http://www.digitales.us>



Voicethread
<http://www.voicethread.com>
ReactionGrid
<http://reactiongrid.com>



NETS.S 2, 3, 4



C21 INTERDISCIPLINARY THEME:
 Global Awareness, Civic Literacy

C21 LEARNING AND INNOVATION SKILLS:
 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication and Collaboration

C21 INFORMATION, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY SKILLS:
 Information Literacy

C21 LIFE AND CAREER SKILLS:
 Debaters would have all of these skills, students in a supportive role may have different elements of this standard depending on their roles

 ISTE STANDARDS

NETS.S 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

 21st CENTURY SKILLS
C21 INTERDISCIPLINARY**THEMES:**

Global Awareness

C21 LEARNING AND**INNOVATION SKILLS:**

Creativity and Innovation

C21 LEARNING AND**INNOVATION SKILLS:**

Critical Thinking and Problem

Solving

C21 LEARNING AND**INNOVATION SKILLS:**

Communication and Collaboration

C21 INFORMATION, MEDIA AND**TECHNOLOGY SKILLS:**

Media Literacy

 WEBSITES
Edmodo<http://www.edmodo.com>**NAME OF PROJECT:** "A Week in the Life . . ."**WEBSITE URL:** <http://www.aweekinthelife.org>**LOCATION:** Worldwide**COMMUNICATION:** Technopersonal and interpersonal; asynchronous and synchronous**GENERATION:** Contemporaries**INFORMATION:** Other learners; teachers as coaches; local classroom resources**LEARNING LEGACY:** Private access to Edmodo group through the classroom

on a common set of guiding questions. The project also teaches digital citizenship and introduces students to the concept of a digital footprint.

This project currently uses Edmodo for communication, group creation, and file uploading. The project wiki provides collaborative sharing as well as a learning platform. Many subjects are integrated, such as geography, math, science, technology, social studies, and writing as the students study school time, languages, clothing, housing and transportation, leisure time, food and celebrations, and the environment.

SUMMARY

Global collaborative learning experiences are an essential trait of the 21st century school. It is time to move forward in every school and experience the advantages of these projects in classrooms around the world. Global collaboration has evolved since the beginning of the information era and allows classrooms to merge into common experiences and projects.

Integrating it into the curriculum is vital to those schools that want to remain relevant, engaged with learners, and known for achievement. Global literacy and global competency are now being discussed as an important part of the curriculum of each school. You can't develop global literacy from a book; it can only come through experience.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS



- Can you have an excellent education without global collaboration? Why or why not?
- What does a modern global collaborative classroom look like?
- How has global collaboration in education changed through the years?
- What are the challenges of embedding global collaboration in the classroom?

◀ Join in the discussion about these topics @ <http://tinyurl.com/flatclass-ch1>

THE FLAT CLASSROOM™ DIARIES

Diary Entry 1

DREAMS WHEN WE'RE AWAKE

By VICKI DAVIS

January 2009, Flying home from the first Flat Classroom Conference Doha, Qatar

I am nestled amidst the sluggish heaps of jetlagged tourists, entrepreneurs, families, and a mom with one colicky golden haired baby while contentedly listening to Van Morrison about 20,000 feet above the border between Iran and Iraq pondering the meaning of life.

The lady two seats up is watching *Eagle Eye* (a movie) with Arabic subtitles. The man beside me left his seat a while back to remove his Arabic garb and put on a pair of comfortable black flannel sleeping pants. Katie, my exhausted student from south Georgia USA snuggles against a window that, if open, would show her Eastern Europe approaching at a pace of 500 miles an hour.

And that is really how I feel at this moment, with the rush of oncoming air; a vision is coming upon me for what this flat world truly means.

In my whole life, I have never seen what I saw this weekend. I daresay any peace-keeper on earth would sob at the sight of students from the U.S., Qatar, Syria, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Oman, Iraq, India, Australia, and so many other places laughing contentedly together in the midst of Qatar's famous market, the Souk



Read the rest of this Flat Classroom Diary online.

<http://tinyurl.com/flatdreams>

Diary Entry 2

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNEY, A LETTER FROM JULIE LINDSAY

Written in Beijing, China, June 2011

"Come and teach in the real Africa," was the advertisement that inspired my husband and me to apply for and finally accept our first international teaching positions in Zambia, January 1998. Our daughter, Violet, was three. We sold most of our worldly possessions in our hometown of Melbourne, Australia, and left for Africa on our new adventure. We are still out there, over fourteen years and five countries later (Zambia, Kuwait, Bangladesh, Qatar, and now China), experiencing in addition to Australian, also British and International Baccalaureate curriculum while exploring and embracing diverse cultural differences.

My life changed again when Vicki Davis and I started the Flat Classroom Project. I was in Bangladesh in a 1:1 school with wireless Internet access and with students who were studying the impact of technology on society.³⁰ In

addition Web 2.0 was emerging as a platform for communication and collaboration. The time was ripe to embark on something new that could be scaffolded by the new online technologies and could join students across the globe in meaningful learning experiences.

Being an international educator, and having a daughter as a "third-culture kid" (with educator parents³¹), I selfishly want others around the world to experience what we are privileged to live. I want them to be confronted with different religious and cultural beliefs and be immersed in an environment where English (or their own language) is not spoken and where simple communication can often result in highly creative sign language. I want them to



Read the rest of this Flat Classroom Diary online.

<http://tinyurl.com/flatjourney>

acknowledge and respect differences and learn how to use their personal strengths to create a bond of understanding with new friends. I want them to question, doubt, be amazed, experience alternative lifestyles, treasure similarities, and learn how to get on with other people globally. I want them to be able to do this without losing their own identity and sense of belonging to a country or to a culture, and without feeling superior or inferior to any other person.

Through Flat Classroom we are building bridges, forging new pedagogies, and questioning current education systems that place value on content above process and individual output and gain rather than on collaboration and community learning for understanding. This book is a part of the bridge and we encourage you to learn from the stories and apply it in your own learning situation. I encourage you to embrace your own global journey.

CASE EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL COLLABORATION

Case Study 1



From the Leaders: **TERRY FREEDMAN**,
ICT consultant and original Flat Classroom Project judge in 2006³²

I think this project has gone far beyond its original remit, which, in essence, was to explore Friedman's concept of the "flat world" in ways that exemplified living and working in a flat world. Thus, students and teachers from different parts of the world have collaborated on research and presentation (in the form of a video). This has been both enriching and challenging.

The enrichment comes from working with other people who have a completely different culture from one's own. A casual remark or gesture in one country may be deeply offensive, or at least questionable, in another. It is good that young people have the opportunity to make mistakes before doing so in a situation that could have grave and lasting consequences!

But it has also been challenging, especially for teachers. On a practical level, how do you coordinate the curricula of schools from across the world? How can teachers ensure that the time devoted to such a large project pays dividends in terms of meeting their own nation's targets? What constitutes collaboration, how can it be encouraged, how can it be measured, and how can an absence of (real) collaboration be addressed? And going beyond collaboration, how do we judge if genuine and important learning has taken place? And if it has, will the student remember the lessons learned in a year's time, or in three year's time? The various interactions of the Flat Classroom project have given educators access, in effect, to a vast testing ground in which such issues can be examined.

Case Study 2



Promoting Change in an International Environment³³
From the Leaders: **DR. JOHN TURNER**,
Head of Educational Technology, Canadian International School,
Hong Kong

When the opportunity presented in the early 2000s to be part of the early Flat Classroom projects it was the right opportunity at the right time. With Web 2 taking the classroom even further beyond its four walled limitations here was an authentic educational project of value for students and teachers alike.

Web 2 technologies such as Ning, Elluminate, and particularly Wikispaces have become staple educational tools for many. At the time, though, they were new and challenging.

What they provided in global connections for teachers and students as co-learners was immediate and helped foster even more learning through their array of tools.

The Flat Classroom projects allowed for teachers to connect within the school and around the world as co-learners and educators. At-hand support and communications were vital for problem solving and keeping up-to-date (even if 5:00 am and 11:00 pm meetings to fit in with different time zones

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are probably not what most teachers see as a professional likelihood).

The opportunity for students to join together generated incredible cultural interchanges and understanding. Be it American, European, Middle Eastern, or Asian students, all could see firsthand that they all shared similar dreams, aspirations, and concerns. Truly a global experience. This carried over into the first Flat Classroom Conference in Doha, which I

was part of. Here students saw their online friends up close and stronger connections were made all around.

In conclusion, when I look back, I see the opportunities provided and the strong learning base for taking on change in an ever-changing digital world. For my learning, my students' learning, and for many other teachers and students around this increasingly connected world, the Flat Classroom has been and continues to be a significant contributor.
