Online Collaboration
HOW TO START

Schools are changing from places where students learn about the world to places where students learn with the world.

Julie Lindsay

A defining moment in my life as a global educator happened when I was working in the Middle East in 2007. As the IT Director in a large international school in Qatar serving mainly local Arabic students, I was working with the Grade 10 technology class. To flatten the classroom walls and connect the students with those outside the country, we embarked on a three-month global collaborative project that joined my students with students in Australia, the United States, and countries in Europe and Asia. In mixed-classroom teams, they communicated online to conduct joint research and create multimedia products on a team topic related to the project's overall theme, "The World Is Flat."
Some of my students were team leaders and learned the joy and pain of monitoring and facilitating a virtual team. One of these leaders was Yara, a capable, intelligent, and forceful student who relished global collaboration and devoted hours to learning about how to get the best out of her team through effective communication.

Yara’s team collaborated on the topic, “Google takes over the world.” Using an online social community tool called Ning, the team developed personal profiles, bloggers, shared media, and interacted in many ways, including synchronous chats. They co-created a wiki page with current news and information about the impact of Google on areas like education, business, and employment. Each student designed an individual multimedia product to communicate his or her ideas from this research; this video had to include an outsourced clip from another student on the team (who was in another school and probably another country), taking design, communication, collaboration, and creation skills to a new level.

In this global project, students collaborated in ways that were completely visible to anyone in the world. We had some awkward moments: One student posted her full address and phone number to the world, and another chose a picture of bottles of beer as his avatar (he liked the pretty pictures!), which was inappropriate, particularly in a culture like Qatar’s. But with careful monitoring by student leaders and teachers across all classrooms, we shared, curated, and moved the learning forward.

Back to the defining moment. At a parent-teacher event, I saw a tall, elegant woman in an abaya and hijab marching toward me. She looked emotional and confrontational, and I wondered what I had done wrong. Realizing that it was Yara’s mother, I immediately feared a reproach for connecting her daughter with the world.

But no. She was in tears, but tears of joy. She exclaimed how excited her family members in both Bahrain and Qatar were to have Yara participate in this global project, and what a rewarding experience it was for them all to track the student output, learn along with Yara, and support her in her global communication. I realized at that moment that all the work it takes to teach students how to learn in a global classroom was worth it.

Living and working in the future will require cross-platform skills that will be freelance and flexible, local and global.

Global connections can transform learning across communities.

I met up with Yara a few years later. She was an ambassador at a global conference and was studying law—a confident and amazing young woman working passionately on global causes. I felt immensely proud to have contributed to her development, even in a small way.

**Why Online Global Collaboration?**

Online global collaboration broadly refers to geographically dispersed educators, classrooms, and schools that use online learning environments and digital technologies to learn with others. Such collaboration supports curricular objectives, builds intercultural understandings, develops critical thinking, and grows students’ information and communication technology capabilities. Regardless of whether participants are in the same time zone or on the other side of the globe, connecting and collaborating beyond the immediate learning environment is the goal.

In its first 20 years, online global collaboration evolved from the 1.0 version (exchanging information) to the 2.0 version (both exchanging information and sharing products). Now, with the development of faster Internet and better technology tools, online global collaboration, 3.0 allows us to network, collaborate, co-create products, build knowledge together.
collaborations, they gain an understanding of the power of technology to benefit humanity.

- To create a new paradigm for modern learning. Connected learning pedagogies challenge isolation and change the way we teach and learn. Learners connect and interact with peers, experts, and online communities, building collaborations for deeper understanding of the world.

**How to Make Global Connections**

Online interactions don’t always take the form of specific, complex projects with set starting times, timelines, or outcomes. One simple kind of online global collaboration is real-time encounters employing digital tools that provide essential in-person connections. Using tools like Skype, Google hangout, and other video and chat-based apps, teachers can collaborate with other classes, find guest speakers, and take their students on virtual field trips anywhere in the world.

**Exploring the Rights of Citizens**

For example, global educator Toni Olivier-Barton’s 4th grade students in Colorado Skyped with students in Chile to explore a topic that both were studying—the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The school in Chile provided a list of questions for the Colorado students to research and answer before the Skype call began. During the call, the two groups of students discussed what kinds of school and community rights they had in their respective countries.

**Defending the African Rhino**

Teachers and students can also dip into existing websites and ongoing projects to take part in exciting opportunities for cultural exchanges through asynchronous sharing. For example, the Travelling Rhinos Project (http://saveourrhinos.wikispaces.com/)

The Travelling Rhinos is an award-winning global collaboration started by South African educator Karen Stadler to raise awareness of the plight of the African rhino, which is in danger of extinction through poaching.

Karen made five stuffed rhinos and sent them to five elementary school classrooms in different parts of the world. Each rhino travelled with a journal for the class to record local interactions and ideas, and each had a wiki page online (see http://saveourrhinos.wikispaces.com).

More than 100 classrooms throughout the world have now been a part of this project, joining in conversations about what can be done to save the rhinos. Depending on the teacher, classrooms use different technologies, such as Skype and Google Hangouts, to share their learning about rhinos. Many use blogs and other online tools to share reflections and multimedia around the theme.

**Sharing Local Research**

In the Cyberfair Project (www.globalschoolnet.org/gsncf), teams of students conduct research about their local communities and use digital media to share their findings. Peer
review is an important part of the collaboration: participating students evaluate six other submitted research projects. The highest-scoring entries in each category are submitted to a panel of international judges, who select the winning projects for the year. Projects that received recognition last year described such topics as the art of hand weaving in Coimbatore, India; wetlands preservation in Sichuan Province, China; and waste management and water pollution in Johor, Malaysia.

PenPal Schools
Another online learning opportunity, PenPal Schools (www.penpalschools.com), takes the traditional notion of international pen pals to a new level by connecting student pairs with curriculum objectives. Using this site, a teacher can create a six-week course; the site then matches the teacher's students with pen pals in another class, and the students collaborate and share work to complete the course objectives. Current courses include “Walking to Freedom,” in which students study civic leaders who advocate for acceptance and equality; “World Explorer,” in which students study the life and culture of their pen pal's country; “Protecting the Planet,” in which students learn about environmental issues and the inspiring people who work to address them; and more.

Global Read Aloud
The award-winning Global Read Aloud, or GRA (https://theglobalreadaloud.com), occurs annually from October through early November. GRA founder Pernille Ripp selects several specific books to accommodate various age levels. (The 2016 books were Roald Dahl's The BFG, Sara Pennypacker's Pax, Gary D. Schmidt's Orbiting Jupiter, and Jason Reynolds's All American Boys; plus an author study of picture-book author Lauren Castillo.) Participating teachers read their selected book aloud to their classes, and then make global connections to share and discuss the book—some classes connect with just one other class; others connect with as many as possible. The GRA community as a whole interacts with the authors and communicates through blog posts, Skype calls, Google docs, and many other online tools.

A Week in the Life
Taking the amount of commitment required up a notch, some global communities foster specific, shared learning objectives among a community of learners, usually with an established timeline that dictates workflow and communication patterns. The goal is to foster diverse online global collaborative practices, which may be teacher-led or student-led.

For example, the “A Week in the Life” global project designed by Flat Connections (www.flatconnections.com/global-projects) provides a structured opportunity for upper elementary students to connect, communicate, explore global topics and issues, and co-create digital products that share ideas and solutions. Each iteration of the 12-week project is different depending on who joins. For example, the project that ran from February–June of 2016 included classrooms from Costa Rica, Nepal, Australia, the United States, Thailand, and Canada (http://aweekinthelifelife16-1.wikispaces.com), and the theme was “Global Health and Well-Being Issues.” Students explored health and well-being in their local communities, similarities and differences in health and well-being issues around the world, and solutions to researched global issues.

Teachers in the project first established a community of global learners among themselves, creating a teacher group within Edmodo to communicate and share. They held regular synchronous online teacher meetings throughout the project to determine project directions and discuss any issues. Students were put into mixed classroom teams, in which they explored such topics as healthy lifestyles and disease and illness prevention. The teams researched and shared local and global ideas and understandings around the topics using Edmodo and Google docs—contributing, editing, and deciding priorities for the final products they would co-create on their topic. Students sometimes met in real-time sessions, depending on the compatibility of time zones, to get to know one another and to discuss the project objectives in person. Teams shared their final products through Voicethread and Padlet.

The “A Week in the Life” project empowers younger students to realize they can collaborate with others beyond their immediate vicinity to address global issues and build solutions. This is often the first time a student (or a teacher) has connected with the world with the purpose of learning not just about the world, but with the world. Students focus on learning how to learn with others in an online environment. They develop essential communication and
collaboration skills as well as fluency with digital tools to support this collaboration.

For Our Students' Future
A true global learning environment transforms education so that learning with the world becomes the norm, not a one-time activity. Such an environment provides a variety of online global experiences for every learner every year and flattens the classroom walls (virtual and real) to provide opportunities for personal and social collaboration. As students become older and more digitally fluent and capable, they drive their own projects.

Living and working in the future will require cross-platform skills that will be freelance and flexible, local and global. New technologies such as artificial intelligence and use of personalized devices mean that we must foster digital fluency, information literacy, global competency, and intercultural understanding at all levels of education.

You can be an advocate for online global collaborative learning by harnessing online technologies, breaking through the fear factor of connecting with others beyond your borders, and implementing carefully designed online learning experiences for all ages across the curriculum.

Julie Lindsay (lindsay.julie@gmail.com) is a global collaboration consultant and the founder and CEO of Flat Connections (http://flatconnections.com). She is currently a Quality Learning & Teaching Leader (Online), and an adjunct lecturer for the Faculty of Arts and Education, Charles Sturt University in Australia. Her most recent book is The Global Educator: Leveraging Technology for Collaborative Learning & Teaching (ISTE, 2016). Follow her on Twitter @julielindsay.

Getting Started with Global Connections

Use these websites to get your feet wet by sharing learning online.

Quadblogging (http://quadblogging.net) creates an audience for student blogs by grouping four classrooms. Each week, a different class is the focus class and the three other classes visit and comment on the focus class blog.

100 Word Challenge (http://100wc.net) provides a creative writing challenge for students under 16. Students write a creative piece of up to 100 words in response to a prompt posted each week. Students comment on one another’s pieces, and individual pieces are recognized each week.

Global Math Task Twitter Challenge (http://gmttc.blogspot.com). Participating classes use Twitter to share math challenges and answer challenges that others have shared. Classes can join at any time by following the hashtag for their grade level.

Global Monster Project (www.smithclass.org/proj/Monsters/index.htm). Students describe a “monster” so that others in the world can then create it and share via video and blog posts.

Skype in the Classroom (https://education.microsoft.com/skype-in-the-classroom). Many activities are offered through this Microsoft site, including the popular “Mystery Skype,” in which two classrooms Skype and students ask questions to determine where their partners are located in the world. Rich conversations usually take place, leading to further activities organized around this real-time linkup.

iEARN Learning Circles (http://learn.org/circles). The iEARN organization connects classrooms for intercultural understanding and interaction that leads to collaboration. Learning circles consist of six–eight classrooms that determine a theme and collaborate on authentic student work, such as ebooks and websites.

Note: For more online projects and resources, see The Global Educator: Leveraging Technology for Collaborative Learning & Teaching by Julie Lindsay (2016). Eugene, OR: ISTE.
Teaching for Cosmopolitan Citizenship

Audrey Osler

Teachers sometimes reject the concept of global citizenship because it seems far remote from their students' everyday lives. Some argue that because there is no system of global governance, teaching for global citizenship is irrelevant at best. Others believe it distracts from the more immediate challenges of persuading youth to engage with local and national issues and to practice democracy at school, in the local community, and in their own nation.

But teachers don't have to choose between local and national issues on one hand and global concerns on the other. We need to prepare young people for interdependence and diversity at all scales: in the school community, neighborhood, town or city, nation, and globe. This is what I refer to as education for cosmopolitan citizenship (Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2005). This citizenship learning draws on David Held's (1997) concept of cosmopolitan democracy, which recognizes our complex, interconnected world. It draws on the social and political movements from the 1960s onward that have challenged the nature of power and democracy—not just at the nation-state level but also at work, in the community, and in our personal lives.

Citizens today need more than formal access to the public sphere and to decision-making processes. They also need to understand the complex ways in which they can claim (or be denied) access to public resources and acquire the know-how to engage in political processes. When people feel excluded from these processes, they lose trust in elected representatives and in the political class.

At the same time, the shape of political communities has shifted in response to forces of globalization. More than ever, we have an intensely connected global economy, highly integrated global financial systems, and multinational companies dominating national and international transactions. In environmental politics, human rights, international law and security, and social media, people feel more closely connected than ever before.
In this context, students need to understand the multifaceted patterns of economic factors, cultural processes, and social movements that shape their lives. Teachers must devise programs of study that help students acquire skills to engage in new and changing forms of politics.

Thanks to an Invited Research Fellowship awarded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, I recently had the chance to meet teachers in Japan who were concerned about educating students for our global age and to compare their stories with those of teachers in Europe. I talked with the educators about their lives, their teaching experiences, and their hopes for their students. I draw here on two teachers’ accounts to explore what education for cosmopolitan citizenship might look like.

VERONICA, a Citizenship Teacher in London
Veronica, an experienced educator of some 20 years, was teaching in a
large high school in London. Born in London in the early 1960s to Ghanian parents studying in the United Kingdom, she moved to Ghana as a small child when her parents wanted to make a contribution to their newly independent homeland. Veronica later returned to London in the 1980s as a young graduate. She worked several jobs before deciding to train as a teacher. Her own experiences of migration inform her approach to teaching courses in citizenship: religious education; and personal, social, and health education.

Over the last decade, Veronica's school has seen a substantial demographic change. The school originally served a predominately white British working class community. White British students remain the largest ethnic group, but the school now reflects the “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007) that characterizes London as a global city at the heart of the international economy. A growing number of Veronica's students are themselves migrants.

Veronica is a well-loved teacher ready to share her personal story with students, including the emotional challenges of leaving her country, family, and friends. She is able to empathize with students, many of whom have come to London with their families in search of a better life or as refugees fleeing conflict or repressive regimes. Veronica explains:

One reason I came back to the U.K. ... was because of the poor economic situation in Ghana. I took advantage of the fact that, because I was born here and was therefore a British citizen, it was “easier” for us to come back to the U.K. I had to relinquish my Ghanaian citizenship because we were not allowed dual citizenship. We now can have dual citizenship. I always say that I am Ghanaian.

For Veronica, the concept of flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999) and a citizenship education that fosters flexible and multiple identities in education is not innovative but commonplace, rooted in her life experience.

Ethical Citizenship
Veronica has had to adapt to reconcile the disparity between her sons' experiences growing up in London and events and values that shaped her early life in Ghana. As she put it, “family experience influences how I do things in school.”

When meeting new students, Veronica talks about her family background. “I tell them where I come from and that I’m interested in them,” she says. “I tell them my parents were of poverty on student achievement, Veronica sought a concrete, caring solution to the immediate problem—the child's hunger. She followed this with a pedagogical step, consistent with the human rights orientation of her classroom, encouraging her students (many of whom also experience hardship) to express solidarity by sharing food. In this way, she encouraged ethical citizenship.

Multiple Perspectives
Two topics are particularly relevant to Veronica's students: child rights and refugees. She believed that learning about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Veronica is educating her students to be cosmopolitan citizens, able to recognize how they're connected with others, near and far.

interested in people and ready to learn from different people and cultures.”

This connection creates a constructive learning environment, not detracting from professional duties but enhancing them. Veronica listens carefully to students and sometimes seeks her sons' advice. In one instance, she told her sons about a student who frequently disrupted class. Having no success in correcting the student's behavior, she turned to her son for input. He said, “Look at him as an individual and find out what he likes.”

Veronica noticed the student's clothes weren't clean and one day found him with his head on the table. When she asked if he was all right, the student told her that he hadn't eaten. “I thought, no wonder you can't work.” Veronica said, “I gave him something to eat, and then I encouraged the children to share what they had.”

Recognizing the negative impact would be beneficial to her students, particularly many from sub-Saharan Africa. After learning about these rights, students made observations such as, “My mum needs to know ... we have a right to privacy.” With students' home contexts in mind, Veronica stressed the importance of young people knowing their rights but claiming them without undermining their parents.

Veronica believes that learning about refugees is particularly important for white British students who come across terms such as refugee, asylum seeker, and economic immigrants in the popular press (often carrying negative connotations). Her white students often speak about refugees in a critical way. She uses Refugee Week (recognized in the U.K. each June) to introduce students to the topic of refugees and asylum seekers. Her students develop media literacy skills, examining alternative
perspectives to those that dominate the press and online spaces. In particular, students present alternative stories. The approach has had an effect on her students. After one of Veronica’s white British students learned about his peers’ migration experiences, he explained that he hadn’t meant to express antagonism toward his classmates.

The curriculum links Veronica’s students’ diverse worlds to political and social developments in London, Europe, and beyond. Both her experiences and her students’ experiences help present the human stories behind globalization.

Veronica is a role model of flexible citizenship and multiple belonging. She recognizes a political dimension to citizenship learning and teaches her students skills to recognize multiple perspectives and bias. Veronica is educating her students to be cosmopolitan citizens, able to recognize how they’re connected with others, near and far.

MIN-JI, Teacher of Korean History and Culture in Osaka, Japan

I met Min-Ji at the Japanese middle school where she works in the Tsuruhashi neighborhood in Osaka, sometimes known as Korea Town. Tsuruhashi has one of Japan’s largest concentrations of Koreans, the majority of whom are Zaichichi Koreans, permanent residents whose families came to Japan in the first half of the 20th century, in an era when Japan ruled Korea.

Min-Ji’s grandfather was brought as a forced laborer from Korea to northern Japan. Although “forced labor” sometimes implied kidnapping, her grandfather was compelled to leave Korea because the Japanese state had taken his land. After World War II, forced laborers were not offered transportation back to Korea. Yet, they were not eligible to claim Japanese citizenship.

Learning from the Past

Min-Ji’s “ethnic classroom” is where students of Korean heritage (and sometimes “double” Korean-Japanese heritage) come once a week to learn about Korean history and culture, the basics of the Korean language, and the history of Koreans in Japan. Although Min-Ji’s classes are not available to children of Japanese heritage, all 4th, 5th, and 6th graders at her school study Japanese and Korean history.

Min-Ji’s principal explained that the Japanese government funds “ethnic classrooms” because it prefers that students of Korean heritage attend regular schools, rather than the alternative Korean community-run schools that exist in cities like Osaka. The principal hopes that these students will eventually work for greater cooperation across ethnic divides. More than 80 percent of students in his school are from minority ethnic backgrounds. He expressed his respect for Min-Ji’s work, observing that in Japan, it is not easy to teach about the difficult past. Indeed, he studied Japan’s history solely from a mainstream perspective when he was in school.

Becoming a Teacher

Min-Ji attended Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. She used a Japanese name until she completed high school to avoid discrimination. She quoted an old Korean saying that “changing your name is worse than being a dog,” but pointed out that a Korean name makes it difficult to get a job, be admitted to a school, or even access forms of social security. It’s a common practice for ethnic Koreans to adopt Japanese names; some use them simply for public purposes, reserving their Korean name for the family sphere.

At university, Min-Ji joined a Korean society and realized that some of her contemporaries could speak Korean; it wasn’t simply a language spoken by the elderly! Her university experience proved a culture shock, but it also nurtured new ambitions: becoming a teacher, journalist, and novelist. She realized she wanted to foster young people’s dreams. University gave her new insights into her social and political circumstances, and a desire for change. Today she belongs to an organization that regards national borders as unnecessary. Although some might consider this notion idealistic, it remains rooted in a cosmopolitan vision.

After graduation, Min-Ji wanted to volunteer to teach an ethnic Korean class; when she realized this was not permitted, she returned to university to get a teaching certificate. However, in 1982, an official ruling stated that foreign nationals could not become teachers, something that had a detrimental impact on the
Korean community. At that time, Osaka employed just 18 ethnic Korean teachers. Within 10 years of the ruling, Osaka’s teaching force became exclusively Japanese.

The ruling has since been relaxed as a result of decentralization policies, and Min-Ji was able to get her certificate. There are now 200 teachers of Korean nationality in the city. Min-Ji has a contract (rather than a permanent post) and is one of 11 “ethnic classroom” teachers across the prefecture. She is an active member of the Korean Teachers’ Network, a group of teachers who meet regularly to support one another.

Direct and Indirect discrimination continue, meaning that teachers with Korean nationality cannot be promoted beyond the basic grade. There remains a widespread belief among Korean nationalists that it’s impossible to become a teacher. Today it is possible to opt for naturalization, and some do. I asked Min-Ji whether she had considered this. She said she wished to retain her Korean nationality and be guaranteed equal rights. As she pointed out, she was born and grew up in Japan, pays taxes, and fulfills her duties—but is denied equal treatment before the law. Because Japan does not currently recognize dual nationality, I asked whether dual nationality might be an eventual solution. She believes this might work for children of double heritage.

**Teaching for Justice**

Min-Ji, like Veronica, recognizes a political and moral responsibility to her students. She seeks to ensure that they don’t leave school believing it unlucky to be born an ethnic Korean in Japan, as she once did. This informs her teaching of Korean history and culture, and particularly her desire to provide her students with alternative perspectives on Japan’s difficult past. She stresses the importance of developing her students’ sense of independence and confidence in their identity. She critiques a prevailing viewpoint that suggests minorities need to be supported because they are weak or poor.

Min-Ji explained that students of Korean heritage don’t feel like a minority in this school. They form 60 percent of the school population (30 percent are of solely Korean heritage and the other 30 percent have double Korean-Japanese heritage), and Japanese heritage students commonly see Korean songs as cool and are sometimes envious of their peers’ Korean culture and history lessons. There is positive interaction across ethnic groups, with Japanese students becoming involved in cultural performances—something that doesn’t happen in the other school where Min-Ji works (where there are fewer Korean students).

Min-Ji’s teaching is informed by the discriminations she encounters. Yet it is an inspiring attempt to teach for justice within a democratic system that offers inadequate protection for minorities’ rights.

Her teaching approach is not only culturally relevant, but, like Veronica’s, it’s also socially and politically attuned to her students’ needs. More important, it fulfills two key aspects of education for cosmopolitan citizenship: It empowers students to gain skills to challenge inequality and injustice, and it offers alternative perspectives to the dominant national narrative.

**Creating Cosmopolitan Citizens**

Both Veronica and Min-Ji model cosmopolitan citizenship. While Veronica explicitly frames her teaching within an ethical framework of human rights, Min-Ji’s approach is implicit. Both teachers recognize their students’ potential to develop as cosmopolitan citizens and support young people using a variety of strategies. Although neither teacher works in an ideal context, their teaching prepares students to play an active role in their local communities and in an increasingly interconnected, fast-changing world.

**References**


**Audrey Osler** (A.H.Osler@leeds.ac.uk) is founding director of the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education at the University of Leeds, U.K., and professor of education at the University College of Southeast Norway. Her most recent book is *Human Rights and Schooling: An Ethical Framework for Teaching for Social Justice* (Teachers College Press, 2016). Follow her on Twitter @AudreyOsler.