

# WeChat for Education

## A White Paper



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## We what?

Originally introduced in 2011 as Wei Xin, this name is still used in China, the technology was mainly used as a texting and calling application. Tencent then made several updates to the application and began calling it WeChat. WeChat entered the scene in 2013 in China, making it a year old. The technology is widely known internationally and is an up and comer in the U.S. WeChat is quickly gaining popularity due to its features and appearance. WeChat resembles applications such as Whatsapp? or Line in that it offers a more interactive experience for the user. Below is a comparison of the features offered by each app.

(Table 1)

Whatsapp	Line	WeChat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice calls</li> <li>• Video calls</li> <li>• Share a photo</li> <li>• Take and share movies</li> <li>• Send an audio message</li> <li>• Group chats</li> <li>• Share locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice calls</li> <li>• Video calls</li> <li>• Share a photo</li> <li>• Take and share movies</li> <li>• Send an audio message</li> <li>• Group chats</li> <li>• Add friends with a QR code</li> <li>• Available on your PC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice calls</li> <li>• Video calls</li> <li>• Share a photo</li> <li>• Take and share movies</li> <li>• Send an audio message</li> <li>• Group chats</li> <li>• Share locations</li> <li>• Moments</li> <li>• Broadcast messages</li> <li>• Friend radar</li> <li>• Label favorite messages</li> <li>• Add friends with a QR code</li> <li>• Available on your PC</li> <li>• Shake or find nearby, locates other WeChat users near you</li> <li>• Walkie Talkie</li> <li>• Translate</li> <li>• Newsfeeds</li> <li>• Event Organization</li> </ul>

## Who's using WeChat?

(<http://tinyurl.com/katc7yn>)



According to a Forbes magazine article published in November 2013 mobile social networking apps are rising quickly and significantly in popularity. Teens 16-19 are using apps of this nature to stay connected with friends, family, and their education.

### What is a mobile social networking app?

a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of [Web 2.0](#), and that allow the creation and exchange of [user-generated content](#).

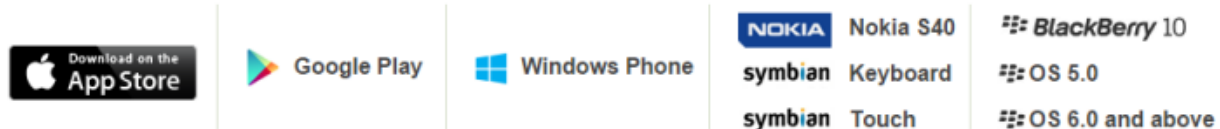
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media))

Based on the findings charted above in the “Where in the World” infographic it is clear that WeChat is popular in Asia where as the U.S. uses WhatsApp. What makes WeChat different? If you refer back to table 1 that compares WeChat, WhatsApp, and Line it is clear that WeChat provides additional ways to share information. Students enjoy the instant connection a mobile application can bring. According to current research 80% of teens own a smartphone. The use of mobile networking apps such as WeChat creates a learning environment that opens many lines of communication. Imagine teaching a lesson and seeing all of your students engaged in a variety of ways. Some may be taking notes, some may be taking photos, and some may be looking at newsfeeds to further the discussions and content of your lesson. Once the lesson is complete you can post extra links, photos, thoughts, or questions to further the learning outside the classroom, all while keeping the information in one place. This might help you to assess for further explanation or challenge and to ensure all of your students are participating in their education.

## Where do I obtain WeChat?

WeChat is available for free through your app store, play store, or [www.wechat.com](http://www.wechat.com). WeChat supports the following platforms/devices:

### Mobile



### PC



(<http://www.wechat.com/en/download.html>)

## Tools needed to implement

Due to the wide spread use of social media, tools needed are few. Each student will need a smartphone or tablet that allows them access to the internet. The students will then download the app, set up their account and they will up and running.

## Basic Overview

WeChat is a private social network. Commonly referred to as a communication app, individuals can talk, text, video chat, or share thoughts with a group of friends using their mobile device i.e. cell phone, computer, or tablet. This technology is important for education due to increasing need for student engagement in our 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. Why is this important? We have standards of some sort that we are required to present to our students. These standards are put forth to help students to be successful in an ever increasing technology based world. ISTE, the group that creates such standards tells us the following on the home page of their website:

“The ISTE Standards are the standards for learning, teaching and leading in the digital age and are widely recognized and adopted worldwide. The family of ISTE Standards work together to transform education.

**ISTE Standards for Students** (ISTE Standards•S): The standards for evaluating the skills and knowledge students need to learn effectively and live productively in an increasingly global and digital world”

(<http://www.iste.org/standards>)

As educators we must be in the know about the best technology for our classrooms in order to help our students succeed in the digital world that is all around us. WeChat offers a solution that pulls some of the best of a myriad of social networking apps and puts into one package.

Would it be helpful to use a social networking site that provides methods for keeping a log of communication between you and your students? What if there was a way for you and your students to separate personal messages from school messages while still keeping them mobile and easy to locate, would that help?

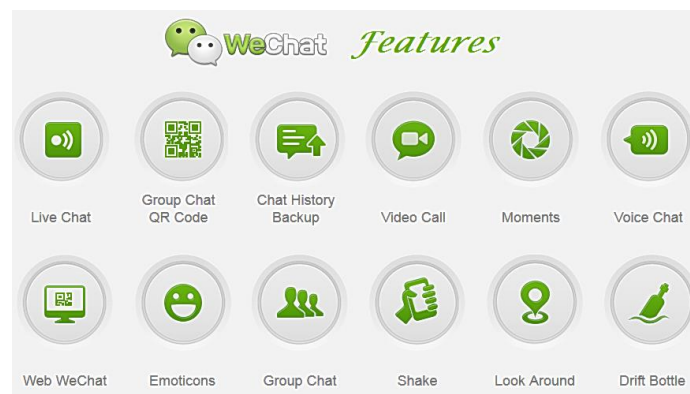
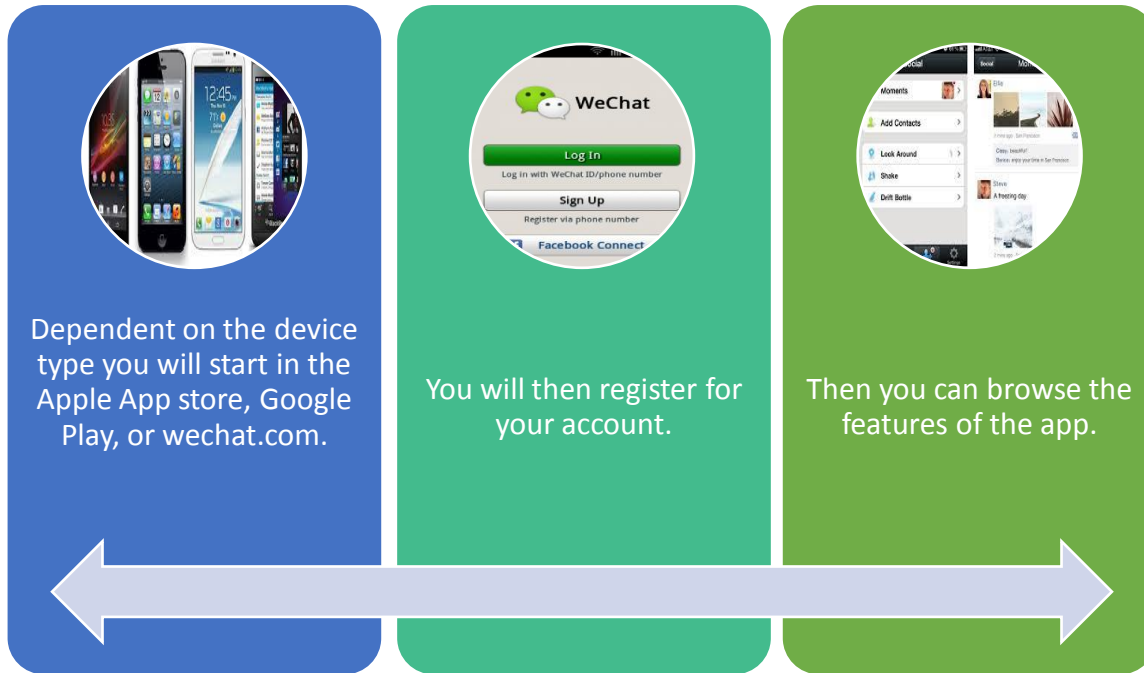
Could you see a benefit to an application that allows you and your students to share documents, comment, and add a photo or video to provide further detail, as well as share the conversation with the entire class or just those the user selects? This can all be done within a private network that does not require the user to provide their personal phone number or their full name. WeChat allows the user to create a screen name for increased privacy. Creating a group of students is simple as well. Your students and you will need only to use a feature of the app called friend radar. Friend radar locates other WeChat users near you and displays them within the application. You then choose who to add to your network with a few quick clicks. See below.

## Learning to use WeChat

Website URL	What you'll find there
<a href="http://bit.ly/WeChatYouTube">http://bit.ly/WeChatYouTube</a>	The WeChat YouTube channel provides videos that show the WeChat user how to download and begin using WeChat as well as learning to use all of the features. The channel also provides videos in relation to updates to the software. You can subscribe to the channel to stay current with any changes.
<a href="http://www.amazon.com/LeeApp-WeChat-Android-Tutorial/dp/B00JXBWKXC">http://www.amazon.com/LeeApp-WeChat-Android-Tutorial/dp/B00JXBWKXC</a>	This WeChat tutorial is free to download via Amazon. You can place it on an Android device and can then read about the features of WeChat. You must download the Amazon app store app to your phone first. You will need to download it here: <a href="http://www.amazon.com/gp/mas/get/android/ref=mas_rw_ty">http://www.amazon.com/gp/mas/get/android/ref=mas_rw_ty</a> You must use your android device to download the app. Follow the instructions for download and then search for the tutorial. I typed in WeChat and located the app I was looking for and installed it. The app then provides how to use WeChat on your device.
<a href="http://mailingtube.net/10-tips-and-tricks-to-get-more-out-of-wechat/">http://mailingtube.net/10-tips-and-tricks-to-get-more-out-of-wechat/</a>	This website covers a variety of topics related to using WeChat. Several talked about how to use features related to "moments" which is one of the uses of the application. Moments allows you to take pictures, write comments, and share with friends. The tips were simple to follow and provide screen shots as well as text for the steps involved.

## What does WeChat look like?

\*All screenshots obtained via [www.wechat.com](http://www.wechat.com) features section unless otherwise noted.





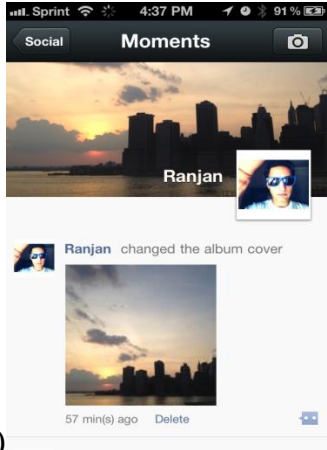
Connect to other social media

Select "Facebook Friends" to connect with Facebook friends in WeChat.

If you can't find the "Facebook Friends" tab:

1. Select "Settings" > "Plug-ins".
2. Scroll down, select "Facebook", and install the plug-in.
3. Return to "Social" > "Add Contacts" > "Facebook Friends" to view friends.

Engage students by encouraging them to personalize the app through moments



(<http://old.entrepreneurhip.com/>)

Add friends with the scan of a code.  
 A QR code (quick response code) is a type of 2D bar code that is used to provide easy access to information through a smartphone.  
 (<http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/QR-code-quick-response-code>)



(Photo collected from my personal account)

## Using WeChat in the classroom

Website URL	What you'll find there
<a href="http://tinyurl.com/n7m4zsx">http://tinyurl.com/n7m4zsx</a>	This article talks about 5 ways that you can use WeChat in an educational setting such as note taking, chat groups, or sharing documents.
<a href="http://www.dreamschool.co.za/wechat">http://www.dreamschool.co.za/wechat</a>	Dream School is a reality TV show that helps disengaged learners reconnect with education. This site defined how to use the technology by giving you a hands-on experience with a WeChat group.
<a href="http://tinyurl.com/k8ktlx4">http://tinyurl.com/k8ktlx4</a>	The study looked at the effects of using mobile technology in the classroom. The study concluded that the use of technology like WeChat improved student motivation and interaction when it came to education based components.

## Common questions from a classroom teacher

<p><b>Information presentation</b></p> <p>“My students love to be on their phones, how can I use that in my classroom?”</p> <p>“My students are all over the spectrum academically, how can I help everyone?”</p>	<p>Due to the fact the vast majority of your students own some type of mobile device all can feel comfortable with the functionality of their own device while the class as a whole can use the same application. You can present information in a variety of ways but maintain consistency. Being able to send messages to different groups of student’s instruction can be varied but you will still have all of the information in one place.</p>
<p><b>Engaging learners</b></p> <p>“Some of my students are visual while others need to hear or use the app as we learn”</p> <p>“Some of my students are too shy to ask questions”</p>	<p>WeChat offers voice, text, video, photo, and a Walkie talkie feature which provides students ways to express themselves where they excel and opportunities to strengthen skills in other areas. Students can send questions to the teacher and they will be private if the student is too shy to ask questions. The teacher can then share the information with the class without embarrassing or singling out students.</p>
<p><b>Guiding learning</b></p> <p>“I don’t want to stand and lecture all day, how</p>	<p>Students will be able to take ownership of their learning through the items they create using the app. For example, a student has questions about</p>

<p>can I include my students in the process?"</p> <p>"How can I answer questions about specific standards I cover efficiently?"</p> <p>"How can I spot gaps in my material and improve my instruction?"</p>	<p>the Civil War as we are studying it. By creating a chat, all students can share their thoughts and facts can be quickly checked with your device through Google or other reliable sources. The students have taken a topic I am presenting and set the course for what they want to learn. This also allows you to see where you need to differentiate the material.</p>
<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p>"How can I check comprehension of the material without creating a mound of papers to grade?"</p> <p>"How can I provide feedback that is meaningful instead of writing great work or super on student homework?"</p>	<p>The teacher will be able to assign quick assignments to check comprehension or to discover a pattern where students are having trouble or have more interest. A chat can be created that asks the students to share what they learned that day. This addresses an issue of endless piles of paper and items to grade. You will have all these short assessments in one chat you can scan and provide feedback.</p> <p>Ex. In math you are discussing algebra concepts. A chat can be created that contains 4 problems to complete. Each student would respond to the chat while only sharing their responses with the teacher to avoid cheating.</p>

## ISTE standards addressed

Source: (<http://www.iste.org/standards/standards-for-students>)

Standard	Application in the classroom
<p><b>Communication and collaboration</b></p>	
<p>Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media</li> <li>Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats</li> </ol>	<p>Allow students to create and manage group chats using the application. Encourage students to interact with students from other countries.</p>
<p><b>Research and information fluency</b></p>	
<p>Students apply digital tools to gather,</p>	<p>Provide a chat that allows students to ask</p>

<p>evaluate, and use information.</p> <p>a. Plan strategies to guide inquiry</p>	<p>questions. Use this chat to help you guide instruction. Encourage students to conduct their own research and share what they find.</p>
<b>Digital citizenship</b>	
<p>Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior.</p> <p>a. Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology</p> <p>b. Exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity</p> <p>c. Demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning</p> <p>d. Exhibit leadership for digital citizenship</p>	<p>Have the students create rules of etiquette for using social media sites. Assign students to create and monitor a chat that outlines the rules and ways to improve them. Require students to sign an honor code pledging not to misuse WeChat for inappropriate purposes. Converse with parents and, with parental consent, add a clause to the honor code that the parent or teacher has permission to periodically view WeChat accounts belonging to students to ensure the honor code is followed. Share some of your own chats from time to time to demonstrate leadership, responsibility, and respect in regard to social networking. On a weekly basis select a student at random and compliment their performance and encourage others to do so as well.</p>

## Benefits and drawbacks

Benefits	Drawbacks
<p>WeChat is a private network, students and parents can feel safe using the application knowing that information will be limited to a specific group of participants.</p>	<p>Due the rise in bullying through social media teachers and students must be aware of the potential for bullying. Expectations should be set and well known by the students. Lead by example!</p>
<p>Teachers can collaborate and share with one another. WeChat allows file sharing, so teachers can create any type of file and share with others. The document can then be viewed by whoever is a part of the chat. Teachers</p>	<p>Some students may not enjoy WeChat as they are learning to use the application or after a period of time. This can cause disengagement. Always be aware of ways to improve the way you are using your classroom tools to</p>

can provide comments; add links, articles, photos, video, or a voice comment all within the same chat. Groups can be set up and labeled with the topic discussed for easy review later.	keep things fresh.
We call see things in many ways; WeChat offers plenty of methods of communication and interaction. Everyone can find a style that suits their needs at that time.	As students become more comfortable with the application they may become distracted by the number of features available. Classroom management will be key.
Students can customize the look by adding photos, creating a unique user name, and adding stickers to their pages. Students love to create something they feel like is all their own thus making the application more engaging.	Some students may not have a platform to use the application. In a perfect world your entire class will have a 1:1 learning scenario. Take time to know the needs of your class before the use of a technology based tool.
The app has a feature that allows you to translate your chats or other pages to another language which will be great for ELL students	Some parents may not be comfortable with the use of an app like WeChat. Take care to set a meeting with parents to explain and demonstrate the application and then keep lines of communication open.
<b>Final Thoughts</b>	

Studies have shown that students prefer social media sites for the instant feedback, personalization, and variety of communication. The goal of many teachers today is to find a way to present information to their students while keeping them highly engaged and pursuing more knowledge outside the classroom. Using an application like WeChat creates a virtual notebook of collected information across all subject areas. WeChat is a wonderful solution to the ever changing needs in the classroom of today. Through the use of such an interactive application students will learn from one another and thus create a positive and respectful classroom environment. There are many features available in WeChat. Take a look for yourself and decide if the app might work for you.