

How Britannica Supports Inclusive, Inquiry-Based Learning at Western Academy of Beijing

About Western Academy of Beijing

Western Academy of Beijing (WAB) is one of Beijing's most culturally and educationally diverse schools, with a student community that includes 58 nationalities. Elementary School Teacher Librarian Beth Rohrbeck, who has taught in China for more than 20 years, highlights the school's commitment to catering to diverse learning needs, an approach that stands out among Beijing's international schools.

"We not only have a culturally diverse school but an educationally diverse one, too. Our strong learning support and EAL departments are central to us being able to cater to different learning needs," says Beth. "WAB prides itself on being student-centered, innovative, and inclusive."



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Beth Rohrbeck, Elementary School Teacher Librarian, WAB

With accessible content and an intuitive layout, Britannica School motivates students to dive into topics independently, building confidence in their research skills.

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A Core Resource for Teaching the IB Curriculum

WAB teaches Elementary School students within the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program (PYP) framework, where structured inquiry serves as the foundation for learning. The school needed a safe, engaging resource that would align with the IB's approach to learning while inspiring young learners to explore the world around them.

Britannica School has filled this requirement, becoming WAB's go-to learning platform for both guided and self-directed exploration, supporting students in engaging deeply with their inquiry projects.

"Britannica is our first go-to resource for research because it's so user-friendly," explains Beth. "In fifth grade for example, students have the PYP exhibition; a culminating project where they explore an issue related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Britannica is integral to the exhibition, supporting students through the entire 12-week research process."



Tools to Support Multilingual Learning

With a significant number of WAB's students learning English as an additional language, the built-in translation and reading scaffolds on Britannica School help bridge language gaps, allowing EAL students to discover at their own level of proficiency.

“Teachers tell me they particularly love the dictionary and translation features – particularly English to Chinese,” Beth shares. “The translation is especially helpful for our EAL students, and the simplified reading levels make the content more accessible.”

Teaching Students to Cite Credible Sources

Emphasising credible sources is a priority for Beth and her colleagues, who encourage students to use databases like Britannica as a reliable alternative to Google searches. To prepare for the PYP exhibition, the school also focuses on teaching students to cite their sources correctly and to value research integrity.

“We really focus on making sure students cite their sources,” says Beth. “Students use Britannica’s citation buttons to ensure they include where they found their information. It’s a great way for them to learn about responsible research.”

Engaging All Levels of Learners

For Beth, the value of Britannica School lies in its ability to foster skills that will serve students well beyond elementary school:

“I’ve worked with many databases over the years, and Britannica is by far the most user-friendly for students. The articles are developmentally appropriate, and there are options that work for students at different ability levels.”

With its engaging, accessible content, Britannica School remains an essential resource in Beth’s toolkit, nurturing curiosity and equipping students with skills that extend well beyond the classroom.

Key Takeaways:

- To support the IB Primary Years Program, WAB integrates Britannica School into inquiry-based learning, empowering students in their self-directed research.
- With a diverse student body, WAB uses Britannica’s adjustable reading levels and translation tools to ensure accessible content for all learners, including EAL students.
- By providing an intuitive, user-friendly platform, Britannica helps WAB students build independent research skills and engage confidently in self-led learning.



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