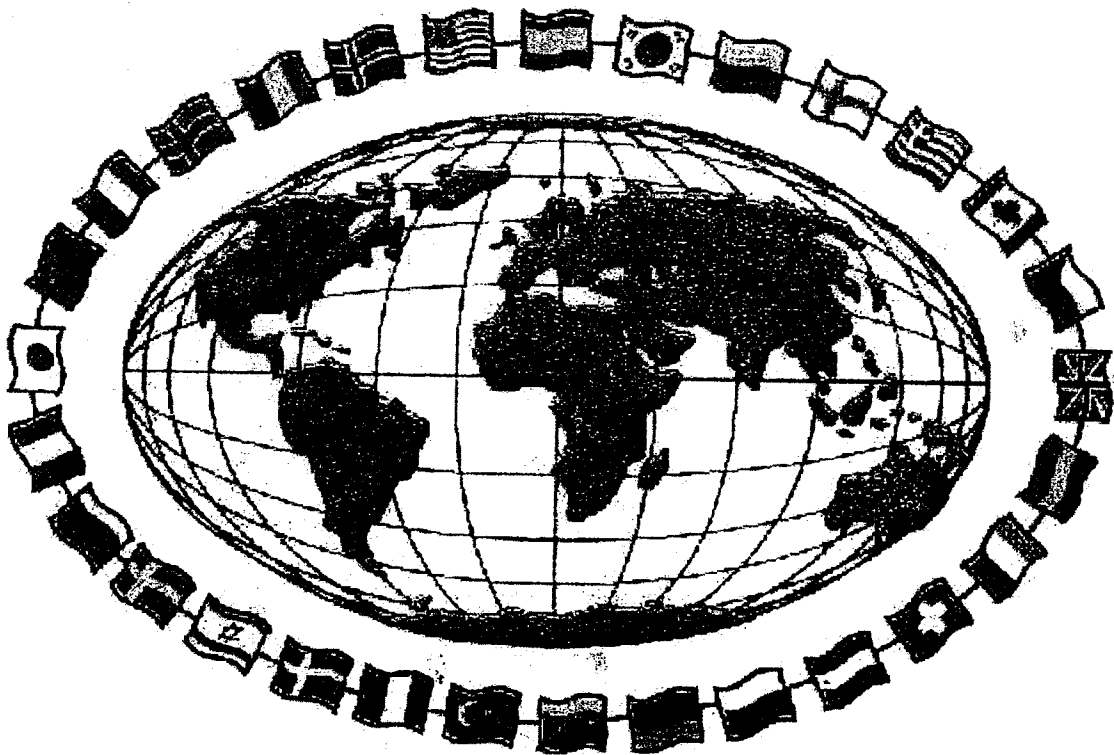


Global Competency Program Portfolio

3





GCP Travel Experience Form

Travel Dates: 6/29 - 7/15, 2009 Destination(s): Costa Rica

Program name or host organization: Global Routes

GCP Travel Partner (refer to the GCP Approved Travel Program List at <http://nhs.needham.k12.ma.us/info/global-c/global-comp.htm>)

Yes (If YES, complete only student and parent signatures) No (If NO, please complete the entire form and put it in the GCP Review Committee mailbox in the Guidance Office. Applications received by the 15th of the month will be reviewed and returned via the student's homeroom by the last day of the month.)

Student name [REDACTED] Current grade 12

Student signature [REDACTED] Date 9/13/09

Homeroom 902 Email [REDACTED]

Parent/guardian name [REDACTED]

Parent/guardian signature [REDACTED] Date 9/13/2009

Program website: _____

Program description (mission and objectives): _____

How will you be challenging yourself to connect and interact directly with the culture and the people?

Check all that apply to your selected travel program:

- Homestay
- 30+ hours of community service
- Cultural study
- Political study
- Economic study
- Historical study
- Language immersion
- Pre-departure fundraising
- Pre-departure program requirements (please list): _____

If this trip/program is non-international, please explain how you feel it will increase your global awareness: _____

Program approved for GCP: Yes No Date reviewed _____

GCP Review Committee Member signature _____

<http://nhs.needham.k12.ma.us/info/global-c/global-comp.htm>

GCP Travel Experience Form 3/29/08



GCP Global Service Form

Student name [REDACTED] Date 6/22/09
Student email [REDACTED]
Homeroom teacher McO'Neil

Name of organization/travel service program Global Routes
Supervisor's name Megan Kelly and Selby Abraham Phone (413) 585-8895
Supervisor's email mail@globalroutes.org

Beginning and ending dates 6/29/09 - 7/15/09 Total hours Approx. 60

Project description:

The group is staying with families in the village of San Isidro, Costa Rica and helping to build a community medical center

Cultural and foreign language exposure:

Staying with families, working on the medical center

Supervisor's signature (upon completion of project) Megan Kelly

If this project is not in conjunction with a pre-approved GCP Global Service Partner or a GCP approved travel/service program (refer to the GCP Global Service Partners List and the GCP Approved Travel Programs List at <http://nhs.needham.k12.ma.us/info/global-c/global-comp.htm>), then this proposal must be submitted to the GCP Review Committee for approval, prior to the start of the community service project. Please put this form in the GCP Review Committee mailbox in the Guidance Office. Applications received by the 15th of the month will be reviewed and returned via the student's homeroom by the last day of the month.

Program approved for GCP: YES NO Date reviewed _____

GCP Review Committee Member signature Paul Paul

PLEASE NOTE: a Community Classroom Student Proposal Form must be completed and approved as well, in order to earn Community Classroom credit for this project. These forms are available on the Community Classroom website: http://fcw.needham.k12.ma.us/%7Egretchen_ayoub/index

<http://nhs.needham.k12.ma.us/info/global-c/global-comp.htm>



GCP Global Focus Project Form

Student Name: _____

Student Email: _____

Country/Region of Focus: Costa Rica

Activity #1

Activity: Watched "Maria Full of Grace"

Date completed: 7/20

Activity #2

Activity: "Viva y Drama" exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Date completed: 7/19

Activity #3

Activity: Villa Victoria Festival Betances, Boston

Date completed: 7/19

Essay Topic: The convergence of American and Latin Culture through Globalization

In a double-spaced, 3-4 page essay, discuss what motivated you to pursue your area of focus, describe the ways in which the project's activities have widened your cultural understanding, and predict how you may apply what you have learned to your future endeavors. Attach the essay to this form.

September 13, 2009

GCP Essay- Cultural Activities

I was sitting on a pile of rocks when it finally hit me. As I sorted large from small, I watched my *hermanito* David and his *amigo* Daiby doing the same, picking up stones as big as their eight and six year-old heads and carrying them over to the hole being dug for the plumbing system. I was tired, sore, fighting a losing battle against the Costa Rican sun, and had heard enough of my fellow Americans' complaints about being thousands of miles away from a decent slice of pizza. But I was going home in a week, back to being twenty minutes away from world class hospitals and a trip downstairs to a can of Diet Coke. My little brother and his friend were not. The concrete walls I was slapping cement onto would become their only source of medicine apart from the small hospital in the city of San Isidro, two hours to the north. I had been deeply disturbed by a Californian's remark earlier in the week when discussing cultural differences. She had said that we as Americans "know more." Know more about what? Before going to the village of Punto de Mira, I had no idea how to make tortillas, pluck feathers from a chicken, or enjoy a community soccer game in the pouring rain.

As Americans, we seem to be born with the idea that we are inherently more educated, civilized, and endowed with a sense of cultural values greater than those of any developing nation. Few of us think about why this is so, from where the sense of entitlement comes, and go on believing that at best we have a responsibility to teach a man to fish because we have plenty of fish ourselves. I am extremely proud to be American, but living in a place so different from Needham, Massachusetts has made me realize what I've missed growing up with a developed economy. We live in a nation where progress is seen as what produced the latest iPhone or BlackBerry. Even a recession means cutting back on the extras, not what is necessary for

survival. Though I lived it for two weeks, I really have no clue what it means to get up at 4 a.m. each morning to farm sugar cane. There is something that is lost in the process of turning the raw plant into a Hershey bar, a sense of human connection that simply isn't there at the grocery store like it is when a father uses a machete to cut down an afternoon treat for his son. What struck me most about my village were not the cold showers or absence of a computer. In fact, I was frequently given Coca Cola with dinner, watched the Copa de Oro with my family on TV, and sat with David as he sang songs in English along with his older sister's BBC produced schoolbooks. The mix of modern conveniences, while still on a much smaller scale than in most American homes, with traditional family life amazed me. Three year old episodes of "America's Next Top Model" were extremely popular, as were simple handheld videogames, but soccer remained the activity of choice.

I chose to focus my study of Latin America on this convergence of the developed and developing worlds, and family and modernization, on what being from the United States made me not know. I looked at the effects of the Columbian-US drug trade through the 2004 film "Maria Full of Grace" and connected the struggle of its title character to observations I had made in Costa Rica. I viewed the exhibit "Viva y Drama" at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a collection of works that depict the struggle between the Mexican people and fascism during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. My final activity was going to the Puerto Rican festival in Boston's South End to see how Latin and American cultures have blended in the United States.

The only aspect of Costa Rican life in which I sadly did not see signs of modernization was the status of women. Marriage is uncommon, and many mothers, including my own, are left to care for their children alone. While financially supported by their brothers, sons, and other men in the community, they themselves are given little opportunity to find a life beyond the

place where they grew up. Punto de Mira was a single street with fewer than 100 residents, most of who are related in some way. Many of the women have their first child at sixteen or seventeen, and in her mid forties, my mother was exceptionally old for her oldest child to be a teenager. As concerned as I was about very intelligent David's chances at higher education, I was worried more for his sister María (who had hung posters of "High School Musical" and "Camp Rock" above her bed), at thirteen already approaching her final one or two years in high school. While the men and children of the village appeared content with their lives, and these lives were truly beautiful because of their simplicity, I could see that the women, particularly the young ones, wanted more. One of them, twenty three year-old Graciela, had plans to go to the United States with a friend, but was forced to stay home when she became pregnant with her now two year-old daughter. As is the case with many families, the father is long gone.

I thought about Graciela while watching "Maria Full of Grace," the story of Maria Álvarez, a seventeen year-old Colombian who enters the dangerous world of the cocaine trade to provide for her family. I certainly do not believe that anyone in my remote village takes part in this kind of operation, but rather see the comparison in their mutual hungering for a different life. María, who swallows sixty-two cocaine pellets to transport them to New York City, nearly dies in her flight from confinement and a lack of opportunity in her homeland. Her situation in Columbia is much more desperate than those of the women in my village, and she therefore takes much more drastic measures to escape it. The underlying principles remain the same, however, in that the one area in which globalization could translate into true progress, it hasn't.

I looked at the political-cultural relationship between the United States and the Spanish speaking Americas in my final two activities, the Museum of Fine Arts exhibit and the Puerto Rican festival. "Viva y Drama" was focused on the history of propaganda in Mexico,

particularly during the Mexican Revolution, Spanish Civil War, and World War II. It featured works by prominent artists, including Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who highlighted Mexico's intra-national struggle for political, social, and economic equality against the ruling elite, as well as the country's involvement in the global, American and European-led fight against the spread of fascism. At the Festival Betances Puerto Rican celebration in the largely immigrant Villa Victoria neighborhood of the South End, I had the opportunity of seeing Latin culture in the United States. Listening to performances from a variety of Spanish singers, Boston's Puerto Rican community came together in a way much like my Costa Rican family did, blending together food, music, and family in a way that was thoroughly traditional, yet very modern.

Watching the Costa Rican equivalent of MTV one morning with María, I saw two music videos that I had watched in Spanish class, and, less excitingly, the latest Britney Spears hit. It was then that I figured something out, something I hadn't gotten out of Benjamin Barber's Jihad vs. McWorld (which focused on the struggle between cultural preservation and Americanization), all of the research I had done about Hugo Chávez and Felipe Calderón through speech and debate, and my own previous understanding of United States-Latin America relations. We live in a world far more global than we think, where the past and present collide in ways that can make things better for us all if only we look to where they already peacefully coexist. David and Daiby are my hope for this globalized world, two young boys desperate to learn English, while at the same time enjoying the same sport their culture has for decades. I've considered going into public service in the United States for a long time, and while I haven't entirely changed my plans for what I hope to do in the future, I'm now very much thinking about going into a field in public health, possibly with a global focus. For the first time, I'm allowing

myself to say that I feel lucky to live where I do, because I have the opportunity to even consider what I just said. More than anything, I want to find a way to better the lives of my *hermana* María, Graciela, and the other women in Punto de Mira and villages like it, and much worse, in the rest of the world. Only then will I be fully able to say that the convergence of modernization and traditional values will have truly produced something beautiful.

**Needham High School
Global Competence Program
Global Competence Program Résumé**

[REDACTED]

I. International Travel Experience

Global Routes, Costa Rica- 6/29/09-7/15/09, <http://www.globalroutes.org>

- Program's mission: Global Routes trips are designed to connect American high school students with cultures around the world through community service and home stays. The groups work with the people of rural villages to construct a building such as a community or medical center, creating an environment in which the community and the students share a common goal.
- Program's focus: The trip to Costa Rica was broken into three parts: hiking in the mountains of a village near the city of San Isidro El General, a home stay in the village of Punto de Mira, and a few final days of more touristy activities (like snorkeling and going to the beach) in Uvita.
- Major personal achievements: Costa Rica was the first non-English speaking country I had been to, which, while at first nerve-racking, helped me to grow more comfortable with the Spanish language. More specifically, I taught my English-enthusiastic eight year-old home stay brother how to count to twenty, which was an accomplishment for both him and myself. On the last day, I gathered enough courage to jump off a rope swing from rocks thirty feet above a waterfall, a feat made possible from what I had learned in my village the week before: if I could remain positive while mixing concrete and listening to my fellow Americans complain about a lack of Coca Cola, I could do anything.

II. Community Service

Constructing a medical center with my home stay village; 6/2-6/11; approximately 50 hours

- Responsibilities: Carrying concrete blocks, mixing cement and covering the walls with it, sorting rocks, covering walls with primer, planting flowers, speaking Spanish at the worksite, helping at the camp we started for the village school (on vacation while we were there)
- Skills used: Spanish language, strong work ethic
- Skills acquired: Construction, development of my Spanish speaking skills (particularly with construction-related terms and phrases)

III. Academic

A. Foreign Language Study

- Spanish: 4

B. Other Global Academic Studies

- None

(repeat for other relevant courses)

IV. Extra-Curricular

- A. Spanish language film: I watched the movie “Maria Full of Grace,” a 2004 production about a seventeen year-old Colombian girl who becomes involved with the Colombia-US drug trade to support her family.
- B. Art exhibit: I went to the exhibit “Viva y Drama” at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a collection of 1910 Mexican Revolution and Spanish Civil War/World War II propaganda, murals, and photographs depicting Mexico’s struggles between the elite ruling class and the general population, as well as its fight against fascism.
- C. Cultural festival: I went to the Villa Victoria Festival Betances on July 19, a celebration of the Puerto Rican community in Boston’s South End.

<http://nhs.needham.k12.ma.us/info/global-c/global-comp.htm>

Global Competence Program Résumé 6/19/07

Global Competence Reflective Essay
July 19, 2009

Flying into Costa Rica is an experience like no other. The closest I could envision it to was the Great Plains, entirely spread over different shades of green that looked like no one had ever touched them before. That is what it made it so far removed from any part of the United States; the country had been farmed and developed just like my own, but there was something entirely unique about it. Ticos are people invested in their land, trying to conserve something they never intended to destroy. Hiking through La Reserva Cloudbridge, I learned that the damage that had been done to the landscape, leaving it bare and its wildlife homeless, was not a result of local coffee "fincas" or picking fresh bananas, but an initiative begun twenty years ago by American agribusinesses. My guide, who had hitchhiked from the United States and doesn't plan on ever returning, pointed to a cluster of trees that were planted seven years earlier to cover over what had been a field for McDonald's cows. He said that plants there are resilient, and that placing a stick in the ground would likely form a tree. It's no wonder that the people of Costa Rica take so much pride in their landscape. They're just like it.

My host family lived in a remote village, or at least I thought it was remote until the day we went to the beach, an hour and a half drive down a paved road, filled with "se vende" (for sale) signs and American and European development. The road was half an hour from their home, and still seemed worlds away. They had a television, and I slept under the "High School Musical" posters my thirteen year old sister had posted on her walls. Still, there was something so very different from the United States that I saw there, a sense of family and clean, "pura vida" life that is often forgotten with the amenities of 9-5 jobs and supermarkets. My eight year old brother had no video games, and he was perfectly content, if not much happier than the majority of children I see here. The family shared a cell phone, and no one seemed to mind that it resembled the models common in the 1990s. I spent every evening coloring with my brother, with him repeating the crayon colors in English and occasionally playing his sister's English learning CDs from school. I taught him to count to twenty, and he was thrilled to learn, as well as to be patient with my Spanish. My uncles, mother, brothers, and sister all watched the Copa de Oro together, a nightly coming together of family that in the US only the Super Bowl might do.

When it came time for my group's *despedida* (goodbye party), I watched the children and their parents walk through the medical center we had built. It was simple, and not completely done, yet they were very appreciative. What amazed me about their gratitude for the simple things in life was the fact that they were not extremely poor. They just had a different outlook on life, ignoring the commercialism that was ever encroaching on their land. I don't know if it will be the same in twenty years or even ten, but with a village full of children just as curious and kind as my brother, I can certainly hope so.