

Frequently Asked Questions about GL's School Enrichment Programs: Leading, Learning, and Breaking Barriers

- What is the GL work environment like?
- What age group do GL volunteers teach?
- What are GL volunteers' living conditions like?
- Who cooks?
- What is a typical day like?
- What are the GL policies regarding alcohol, drugs, and romantic relationships?
- How much does it cost to work on these GL programs?
- How well do GL volunteers need to speak Spanish and/or English in order to participate?
- Who is on the selection committee? What are they looking for in applicants?

What is the GL work environment like?

- Global Learning is a not-for-profit organization with limited economic resources. The GL work environment is rich in creativity, cooperation, flexibility, and ingenuity.
- GL's annual School Enrichment Programs: Leading, Learning, and Breaking Barriers last for approximately one month in each site during which volunteers experience a cooperative, intercultural living and work experience.
- Working a GL program is a test of one's ability to adapt to new circumstances and challenges.

School Environment in GL School Enrichment Programs

- GL volunteers team-teach. There are about ten volunteers in a classroom at a time and volunteers work with children in small groups. The typical volunteer-to-student ratio is one to four.
- Volunteers teach in Spanish during GL programs.
- The school settings in which GL volunteers teach vary from rural to urban, with the majority being in rural communities.
- All schools that host GL programs have hardworking teachers and staff working in very challenging conditions (i.e. broken desks, overcrowded classrooms, and social problems such as violence and drug abuse).
- The GL schools in which volunteers work have extremely limited material resources. For instance, there are usually no books in the classrooms, children have virtually no access to art supplies, and visual or kinesthetic teaching tools are very limited.
- GL programs provide wonderful opportunities for learning, joy, and hope for all involved, but it can also be heartbreaking to learn about the economic and social challenges that children in underserved communities face on a daily basis.

Team Environment in GL School Enrichment Programs

- Collaborating as peers, branching national and cultural divides, and creating organically in a group can be messy, difficult, and very fun.
- GL is dedicated to democratic decision-making, with all of its benefits and challenges.

- Volunteer planning sessions and trainings are completely bilingual in English and Spanish. This provides a rich language learning experience and ensures that all voices are heard.
- Volunteer meetings, planning sessions, and trainings are usually held in the volunteer living quarters. Sometimes there is plenty of room and chairs for all. Lots of times volunteers sit in a circle on cement floors and tape visuals to limited wall space.
- Volunteers work and/or have team activities and responsibilities seven days per week, for the entire duration of the program.
- With teaching responsibilities at school, chores in the communal living environment, daily group meetings, materials preparation, volunteer training, and curricula work, it is not uncommon for volunteers to have as little as one to three hours of free time a day, and to have some days with no free time at all.
- In order to relax and rejuvenate, one day a week is set aside for a team day trip to a local site of interest. Even fieldtrip days are group oriented, as they provide important time for volunteers to build a unified team and friendships outside of a work environment. These little trips are special parts of every week, but, of course, they are not the main focus of the program. Instead, programs are centered on the work and intense cultural and team experiences that volunteers share.
- For volunteers who are ready, the challenges in GL programs provide powerful experiences that are deep and life changing.

What age group do volunteers teach?

GL volunteers teach and learn with students in Kindergarten through high school, though most work is done with children in elementary school.

What are Global Learning volunteers' living conditions like?

- Volunteers' living conditions in School Enrichment Programs: Leading, Learning, and Breaking Barriers are safe and simple.
- Participants in all GL programs should expect cold water for bathing, limited personal space, and daily chores to contribute to a communal living environment.
- All GL programs are alcohol- and drug-free, in and out of the living environment.
- Volunteers' relationships with teammates and community partners remain strictly platonic for the duration of GL programs.
- Each GL team follows curfew rules established in consideration of local community norms. Most often the curfew is 10pm.
- Accommodation for GL volunteers in Costa Rica is generously provided by the University of Costa Rica in Liberia, which furnishes a residence hall that includes cooking facilities, room for lesson and material preparation, and common space for group activities. All volunteers, local and international, live together in the UCR residence hall. Bedrooms are usually double occupancy and are single-sex.
- The living arrangements in the GL Nicaragua programs offer volunteers a unique opportunity to be integrated into local neighborhoods. All foreign volunteers and some local volunteers live cooperatively in a home rented by GL for the duration of the programs. In keeping with local customs and norms, most Nicaraguan volunteers continue to live with their families, but the team as a whole gathers in the group home on a daily basis to cook cooperatively, enjoy meals, prepare lessons and materials, hold meetings, and participate in team activities.

- Please note that in the Nicaragua GL programs, amenities such as water and electricity are not always reliable. Volunteers should be prepared for an experience that requires particular flexibility. Participants should expect hand-wash laundry facilities, bucket showers with cold water, crowded sleeping conditions (often on pads on a cement floor), wood cooking stoves, and exceptionally limited personal space.

Who cooks?

Each GL volunteer team has a rotating schedule for cooking and cleaning jobs. Pairs or small groups of volunteers (with a mix of volunteers from different countries) prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Volunteers bring recipes for tasty meals with basic ingredients (i.e. rice, beans, vegetables, fruit) that represent their diverse communities and cultures. Some volunteers choose to bring spices to share with the team. To keep costs down, GL volunteers eat very little meat during programs. Volunteers should expect a simple, primarily vegetarian diet.

What is a typical day like?

Every day in Global Learning is different, but here is a fairly typical teaching day:

6:00am Wake up + breakfast preparation

7:00am Breakfast

8:00am Leave for school

8:30am – 2:30pm Teaching time (lunch at school)

2:30pm – 3pm Travel home from school

3 - 4pm Materials organization and preparation time

4 - 6pm Personal time and dinner preparation (usually about an hour for each)

6 - 7:30pm Dinner + cleanup + meeting preparation

7:30 - 9pm Group meeting/training

9 - 10pm Free time and/or personal preparation for the following day

10pm Quiet Hours start...for safety and to protect GL volunteers' positive reputation in the host communities, on most days GL volunteers are expected to be in the residence no later than 10pm. Quiet Hours create a respectful and peaceful environment to allow volunteers enough time to rest and sleep.

What are the GL policies regarding alcohol, drugs, and romantic relationships?

To preserve the strong, positive reputation that Global Learning has in its host communities and to keep the focus on the good work GL volunteers do, all GL programs are alcohol- and drug-free (even during very limited “off time”). GL volunteers' relationships with coworkers and community members remain platonic for the duration of the programs. Additionally, each GL team follows curfew rules established in consideration of local community norms. Any violation of these rules or the Global Learning spirit of professionalism is cause for dismissal from a program.

How much does it cost to work on these GL programs?

- Global Learning works hard to keep the costs of our programs as low as possible so that participation is open to people from diverse financial backgrounds. Volunteers from the U.S. and Europe have two financial responsibilities for GL's School Enrichment Programs: Leading, Learning, and Breaking Barriers.

1. **Each U.S. and European volunteer is responsible for paying or fundraising at least \$600 to donate to the organization.**
2. **Volunteers from Europe and the U.S. are also responsible for booking and paying for their airfare to the program site.** Airplane tickets from the U.S. to Latin American program destinations generally cost between \$400 and \$700. Tickets from Europe vary greatly, but are usually between 700 Euro and 900 Euro. Volunteers from the U.S. and Europe are also responsible for any airport taxes, passport and visa fees, and other costs related to getting to the program site.
 - Once the team meets up, volunteers have no other financial responsibilities except for any souvenirs or activities outside of the scheduled program. **Global Learning covers all food, housing, school material expenses, ground transportation, and group activity fees for all volunteers (local and foreign) during the programs.**
 - As a response to global socio-economic disparities, experienced GL volunteers from Costa Rica and Nicaragua volunteering with the organization outside their country have no costs. In addition to covering food, housing, ground transportation, school materials expenses, and group activity fees as it does for all volunteers, GL will also pay for airplane tickets, visas and passports for volunteers from the GL host communities in Costa Rica and Nicaragua,.

How well do GL volunteers need to speak Spanish and/or English in order to participate?

Volunteers working on GL’s School Enrichment Programs: Leading, Learning, and Breaking Barriers teach in Spanish. Hence, all volunteers (foreign and local) must have at least intermediate Spanish skills (usually this is at least two years of college Spanish or at least one month of intensive learning in an immersion school). It is helpful if local and foreign volunteers speak English, but it is certainly not a requirement. All team meetings, trainings, and lesson preparation are bilingual in English and Spanish and translators are present to ensure that volunteers may speak in the language in which they are most comfortable.

Who is on the selection committee? What are they looking for in applicants?

Experienced GL volunteers, support people, and coordinators are on volunteer team selection committees, which usually consist of four to five people. When selecting volunteers, the committees do not look for applicants to fit into a certain mold, but instead aim to create balanced teams of individuals who complement one another’s strengths and challenges.

Selected GL volunteers are very diverse in personality, age, culture, education, leadership style, life experience, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class. This being said, there are some traits common to most GL volunteers. For instance, volunteers working on GL School Enrichment Programs: Leading, Learning, and Breaking Barriers speak at least intermediate Spanish, value children, and try to learn with open minds. Other common traits include maturity, professionalism, humility, flexibility, a strong work ethic, and a healthy sense of humor.