

Global Citizenship in Action: Reflections from the GCD Up Conference in Nanjing

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Students from around the globe gathered in one place: an auditorium in Nanjing, China. With inspiring leaders of the future from schools in China, Brazil, America, Thailand, Oman, and Hong Kong, the atmosphere buzzed with curious energy. We united from around the world to connect across cultures, share our stories, and become agents of change. A

As we reflected on our time, we interviewed other students who attended the GCD conference, highlighting how, for many of us, our stories are more than just grades and test scores. These personal experiences speak to the deeper impact of our work and involvement, beyond what can be quantified by numbers.

The Brazilian school, [Escola Concept](#)'s, mission is to nurture lifelong learners who foster collaboration, think entrepreneurially, live sustainably, and are globally and digitally fluent. Students at Concept are taught to use thoughtful language and problem-solving skills. The school has locations in São Paulo, Salvador and Ribeirão Preto. We interviewed the Global Citizenship Ambassadors from Concept in São Paulo to understand their experiences with the GCD Up trip. One of these lifelong learners is Grade 11 student, Marcello X. F. When asked about the GCD, he said he related it to the GCD element of intercultural communication. Marcello explains, "This GCD week, my friends and I learned a lot about respecting different cultures, and it is a thing that we will surely implement on a daily basis at school." The opportunities on the GCD Up trip allowed them not only to become better learners, but to also become better collaborators who are globally fluent.

When visiting another place, you are sure to learn about their culture, but on the GCD Up trip, the cultural learning experience was a big part and made an impact on a lot of students. On the first day, we were greeted by cultural music and dances like the face changers and dragon dancing. This cultural celebration continued throughout the trip as we shared about our culture with the entire group, and when we started to get to know each other, we were able to understand each other's cultures more. Whilst there was a specific time cultural-sharing time, being in that environment and learning how to communicate with others, gave us a culturally diverse experience that benefited us all. During this GCD trip, we communicated a

lot with others, whether it was in the workshops, discussions over lunch and dinner, or the bus rides to the new experiences. One amazing experience everyone had on this trip was connecting via social media, and we were able to see each other's lives and experiences from all around the world. Marcello shares that his biggest takeaway from the trip is, "the new people I met and friends I made all around the world." These are such special connections that foster collaboration in every environment.



Located in the heart of the bustling city of Bangkok sits the sole GCD school in the nation, [NIST](#) (New International School of Thailand). These young leaders from NIST traveled to Nanjing to represent their school's guiding principle: "Inspire growth, empower excellence, and enrich lives." This remarkable experience gave them a chance to learn and grow in a way they will never forget. Among these young leaders, was 16-year-old Anatasia who reflected on her experiences: "One of the takeaways I had from this trip was how important it was to use my role as a global citizen to make an impact on the world, as it made me realize that it was actually quite easy to make changes (through designing solutions), and that the hardest thing was to start." This opportunity not only left students with long-lasting valuable insights but also taught them the power of taking initiative and the importance of being the catalyst for change in the world.



Among the various schools participating in the conference was [Hong Kong Academy](#) (HKA). At HKA, student leaders strive to fully understand their roles in the

world, guided by their motto, “Student Identity as Global Citizens.” Through GCD Up, students were able to truly embrace their goal and learn what it truly meant to be ‘global citizens.’ One of the student leaders, 15-year-old Samriddi, shared her perspective: “I am Nepali by ethnicity, but I was born and raised in Hong Kong. I used to think that this alone was enough to make me a global citizen. But in reality, a global citizen is someone who not only associates themselves with a specific nation, but recognises and advocates for the struggles and challenges that are faced within the community of a specific country.” This experience gave students the ability to reflect not only on the world around them, but also on their own identities, deepening their understanding of what it means to be an active global citizen.



[ABA Oman](#), the only Middle-Eastern school in the GCD Consortium, sent a group of globally minded students to the conference. Located in Muscat, Oman, ABA’s mission is to “Inspire and empower learners to explore their unique pathways to success.” Aitor, a 10th grader from ABA, was asked about his experience at GCD Up: “My favourite part of the GCD is how open people were in talking about their culture as well as their stories. I also really enjoyed talking to all the new people I met and how willing they were listening to me.” We also asked Marat, Grade 10, about his thoughts: “...our group of GCD participants will be incorporating our learning from GCD Up by making a club within our school and including the same workshops within the club. My favourite part of the trip would most likely be exploring the Chinese culture within Nanjing and just overall exploring Nanjing itself. The JEDI workshop was one element I deeply resonated with.” GCD Up gave students the opportunity to not only explore Chinese culture, but also to take part in workshops that they can bring back to their own school communities.



[Nanjing International School](#) (NIS) hosted the GCD Up conference. Students from NIS also attended the conference while their families hosted us and many of the other international students. NIS is an “Inclusive Learning Community Inspiring International Mindedness, Personal Excellence, and Creative Thinking.” Kirsten, a 17-year-old 11th grade student, shared her thoughts on the conference: “Through this GCD trip, I have better understood the importance of community through the lens of making a change within the world around us. This conference hosted like-minded students from around the world eager to create change in their own communities! The energy surrounding the GCD Up conference has made me eager to share and reflect on the ways in which my school can take an active role in creating change around topics such as conflict resolution and belonging. I believe it is best to start by addressing our learnings from this conference in front of our student body and next taking it to our school leaders (Leadership team, Student Council, and JEDI team) to create a structure surrounding our newfound solutions!” Kirsten also noted that her favorite part of the conference was, “talking to different people from different schools to find out how similar we are. It was so comforting talking to like-minded individuals going through the same program as you!” Another student, Jessie from Grade 10, had the following to say: “The GCD program places a strong emphasis on Core Values, Competencies, and Areas of Expertise in order to promote global citizenship. Students had a stronger comprehension of the connections between these components and how they can be used as a result of the trip. For example, interacting with people from different cultures and communities encourages students to consider how their actions affect other people, which is consistent with the program's goal of raising awareness, encouraging action, and fostering advocacy...one GCD element that might resonate most after the trip is the emphasis on intercultural understanding and empathy. This aspect encourages learners to reflect on their behaviors and how they impact others, promoting a more compassionate and inclusive global community.” NIS welcomed all of us students from all over the world to attend this conference, participate in their community, and even to stay in their homes. In Hawaii, we would say that they let us join their Ohana.



Our mission at [Le Jardin Academy](#) is to “Cultivate a community of learners who embrace Hana Pono to impact the world”. Hana Pono is a mission to do righteous work that makes meaning and impacts the world. We believe that it is our responsibility to help each other, the community, and the land, creating a positive environment. The people who travelled to Nanjing, China for this trip were all very outgoing and positive learners. We wanted to connect with all different cultures and have a better global understanding, so we tried everything and explored everywhere. We were always on little “side quests,” which means we were on our own path in some ways to maximize our own memories and experiences. Le Jardin’s favorite adventures were the mausoleum because it was a direct connection to Hawaii, as Sun Yat-sen who founded The Republic of China was educated on the islands. One student from our LJA team noted, “I was born and raised in Hawaii and graduated from schools that are well known here. It was amazing to see that connection in the bigger world.” Our next favorite was dragon boating, which is very similar to Hawaiian Paddling, a very competitive sport and a hobby for many others. This experience was so amazing because we got to compare our rowing to other cultures and be able to connect our learnings with theirs, helping with that global understanding. We loved the GCD Up trip and will be implementing many teachings about it in the future at LJA, helping others become enriched global citizens.

