

GLOBAL VILLAGE PROJECT

Guidebook



A school for refugee girls



GVP Staff and Student Body, March 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Village Project (GVP) is a three-year, full-day school for refugee girls ages 11 to 17, newly arrived in the U.S. and resettled in Clarkston or surrounding areas. Accredited as a "special purpose middle school", GVP prepares these girls to enter and succeed in public high schools. The school is comprised of English-language learning students from all over the world, with anywhere from 10 to 15 languages, from Burmese to Kinyarwanda, within each of the classrooms. Each of these girls have also experienced limited or interrupted education in their home countries. The school is privately funded and free for the girls. This funding covers the costs of tuition, lunch, transportation, books, school materials, teachers and admin salaries, and building costs.

The aim of GVP is to make a broad social impact in the landscape of educational equity, where equity means giving each child the individualized support they need and recognizing that traditional Western practices in school can marginalize students of different backgrounds. In this space, refugee girls could safely enter a different part of society, reaching their full potential as it is defined by them. GVP is a place where the girls take charge of education, define what success means to them, and how they want to impact the world.

Creating a single gender environment was a response to the families' and students' needs. Globally, the majority of children who are denied the right to an education are girls, especially adolescent girls. Students at GVP are representative of the more than 130 million girls and young women being denied an education. Cultural norms that exist in many parts of the world rely on young women to take a large role in caring for their families, cooking, and caring for younger siblings. Relocating to the U.S. and adjusting to new societal and cultural norms, or adopting a new way of life, one where a girl has equal access to education, highlighted the educational gap that exists between most refugee boys and girls. GVP works to fill that gap by providing an intensive, strength-based, and holistic approach to teaching and learning.

HISTORY



In the early 2000s, Clarkston experienced an influx of refugee families. Now, it is known as the most culturally diverse town per square mile in the U.S. With this influx, many people in the surrounding communities began to volunteer their services. It is through this altruism and desire to lessen the gap between refugee girls' and boys' education, that GVP was born.

In 2009, the Board of Directors was created and since then has upheld a vision of providing individualized, equitable, and holistic education free of costs to refugee girls. They determined that to meet students' needs, the program would have to modify many of the practices of Western classrooms, yet maintain enough of the traditional structures to prepare GVP graduates for high school classrooms and beyond.

**Over the years,
the board of
directors has
kept alive the
spirit of its
original
meetings,
to dream big.**

EFFECTIVENESS & IMPACT

GVP measures its impact along two primary dimensions: student growth and alumnae success. In order to measure our effectiveness and impact, we must ensure we have a clear goal. GVP seeks to lessen the achievement gap of ESOL refugee girls with no, limited, or interrupted education. We create an immersive, trauma-informed teaching approach that aims to prepare these girls to enter the public school system in Georgia. We seek to further our mission by providing resources and support to our alumni.

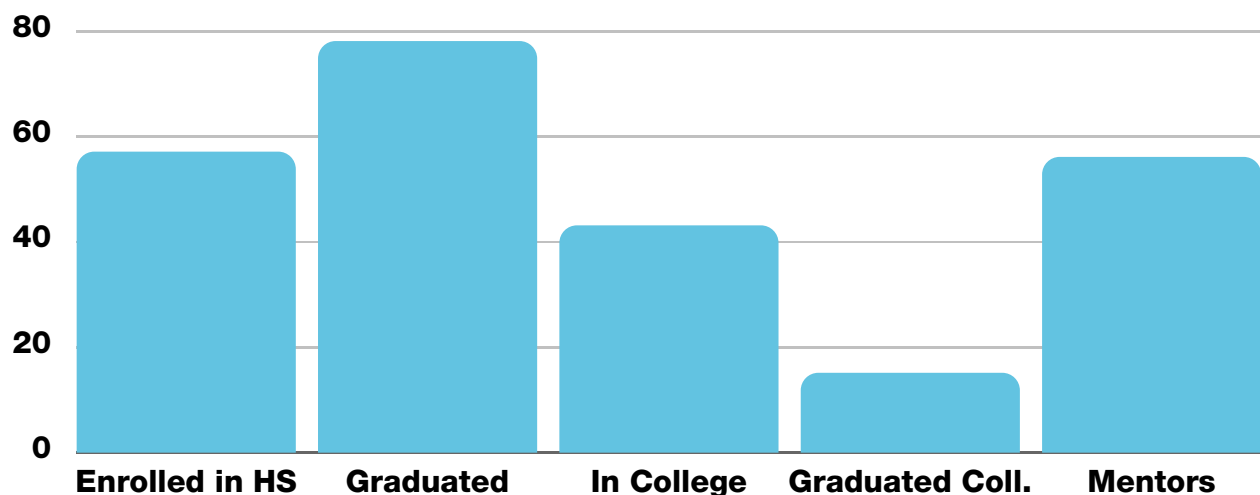
The most immediate growth is demonstrated in the shift of students' academic growth and school success, also impacting families beyond school walls. Academic needs are measured through multiple and varied assessments such as EAME Math placement test for English Learners, WIDA placement tests for Academic English, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, Lexia Core5 Reading assessments, and Measures of Academic Progress tests in Math and Reading. Adaptive assessments are crucial to the success of our student body. Additionally, surveys and interviews with parents and paid interpreters give a more robust understanding of students' needs. Regular and required family conferences are also critical components of growth measurement progress.

To measure student impact, GVP examines the number of alumni attending high school and college, as well as their grade level growth in math and literacy. GVP works on the high school readiness checklist and meeting 21st century levels in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). GVP also establishes a storytelling component throughout the curriculum that allows for students to define their own route of success. The impact is measured through high school, college, and graduate school graduation numbers.



GVP alumni are not only achieving incredible success in high school and beyond but are also empowering their families and local communities. Throughout the years at GVP, 96% of alumni who were enrolled in the academic program for at least two years and then matched with a mentor have continued their formal education, compared to an estimated 75% dropout rate among refugee students.*

Alumni Success



*Montero, Newmaster, and Ledger, 2014

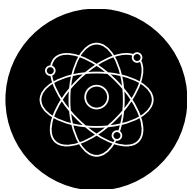
ACADEMIC PROGRAM

GVP's educational model includes four pillars: Intensive English Language and Literacy, STEAM Education, Social and Emotional Learning and Wellness, and Mentoring and Alumnae Engagement. Each of these pillars ensures that the whole individual is supported from their arrival, to adapting to a new culture, to academics in high school and beyond.



No. 01 — **Intensive English Language & Literacy**

The first pillar of the GVP model takes a strengths-based, additive approach to ELL education. English is a vital tool of empowerment for refugees as they adapt to life in the U.S. However, GVP also views students' home languages and cultures as resources, making English another tool to add to the knowledge they already have. The intensive curriculum meets the needs of ELL students with interrupted school and advances their reading levels at accelerated speeds without erasing or devaluing the home languages and cultures of each student.



No. 02 — **STEAM Education**

The second pillar, STEAM Education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math education) takes an innovative, integrated approach to create more inclusive spaces for students to explore these areas and their related careers. GVP combats disparities in academic and career preparation which marginalizes students, not only because newcomers and ELL students are often underserved by STEAM programs, but also because STEAM fields continue to lack women and especially women of color in these fields. Through this program, students participate in more than 25 experiential learning trips and hands-on field trips each school year. GVP's arts-integrated curriculum recognizes the importance of the Arts in learning language, building community, and developing tools for creative expression.



No. 03 — **Social Emotional Learning and Wellness**

A commitment to Social & Emotional Learning and Wellness, the third pillar, recognizes the impact of trauma and emotional difficulties on learning and well-being. Supporting the Social and Emotional Learning and Wellness of students not only includes actively creating space for students to learn how to navigate their emotions but also provides a range of wraparound services designed to support the holistic well-being of students. The Student and Family Support Team at GVP assists students with needs such as food security, access to feminine sanitary products, and health and safety guidance. GVP also supports families through home visits, transportation, and interpretation services during parent conferences and more.



No. 04 — **Mentoring and Alumni Engagement**

Mentoring and Alumnae Engagement, the fourth pillar, continues to center students, support them, and empower them to lead even after they have graduated from GVP. Mentors aid in the process of enrolling in high school and college. Through the guidance and support alumni gain from their mentors and ongoing leadership opportunities, this pillar encourages students to take up the mantle of leadership and consider how they want to use their voices to create powerful change in the world.



THE HOLISTIC MODEL

Overview

Classes contain flexible learning groups, where students are placed into three different forms according to their math and English language proficiency. Within each form, the girls are provided with differentiated and experiential teaching methodologies.

Our immersive English environment aims to increase the exposure to academic and conversational English. Integrated units help to scaffold common language and concepts throughout the curriculum. On-site tutoring, breakout sessions, whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, and mixed media instructional methods support the girls' varied learning styles and cultures.

Group counseling is a vital element of our model. The strengthening of our community (a school community, a community of women, a community of refugees, a community of ELLs, and citizens of our local, state, and national communities) is essential to a trauma-informed approach. Community building and restorative justice, two of the most essential elements of GVP, create a safe space for our students. Community building takes shape in morning meetings, team building activities, social and emotional learning, and restorative circles daily. Restorative justice focuses on relationship building, empathy, peace-building practices, and accountability with reflection. When students are safe to learn, supported in their social and emotional growth, and thoughtfully instructed we will see them succeed in building a future.

Playmaking For Girls, guided reading classes, weekly music class, and various other electives enrich the curriculum. This varied curriculum helps to support diverse learning styles, allowing students to show comprehension in multiple ways that is not limited to their English language skills, but supports them wholly and honors their native cultural understanding and outlook. A culturally responsive curriculum employs the use of authentic texts, real life examples, and relatable materials to increase student performance and develop intrinsic motivation. Within the STEAM curriculum each student is given an iPad for distance learning and independent learning through the use of educational apps. Field trips, guest speakers, local community leaders, and partnerships with The High Museum supplement the curriculum to integrate the students into wider communities.

Student/Teacher Relationship

The GVP model relies on educators with restorative and trauma-informed practices. Educating refugees, especially refugee girls, present a host of challenges unique to their demographic. The teachers at GVP are trained to tactfully approach sensitive subjects, identify the social and emotional needs of the girl, and provide a differentiated learning experience for each student. Class size does not exceed 17 students, allowing the teacher to work individually or in small groups throughout the lesson. Teachers practice community building skills in synchrony with academic content. In order to reinforce a safe and welcoming classroom environment, teachers invest in genuine connections with students. This includes having reciprocal, open dialogues, and intentional one-on-one conversations.

Developing trust and rapport with the student is a key element of the student/teacher relationship. Restorative practices mean collaboration, repair, and reintegration rather than punitive discipline. Teachers help the students to reflect and manage their emotions so they can feel safe to study. Trauma-informed practices identify the existence of how trauma impacts students. For some, this may look like sleeping, acting out, challenging relationships to authority, or withdrawal. Providing space, both physical and emotional, while also managing academic expectations is a skill GVP's teachers balance to ensure the student/teacher relationship is not harmed.



English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Due to the demographics of the community, the population of students has a large diversity of first languages. GVP's priority is celebrating and including many of the languages, countries, and cultures that are presented in the school. As a result of the diversity in languages, a true bilingual approach is not used; all instruction is conducted in English. To teach English to GVP students, small group instruction, read alouds, thinking maps, and hands-on work is utilized. Other class subjects are commonly referenced throughout lessons to help students draw connections between classes. In addition, academic support through volunteer work is offered to students. The GVP model also encourages the use of the girls' first language, and cooperating among one another to develop understanding while building community.



"One important thing I have learned at GVP is we can all be leaders, and I have learned to never stop dreaming."

-Ayat, GVP Alum

Standardized Assessments

Standardized testing is utilized in GVP to measure growth in students. Since GVP is considered a "special purpose, private middle school" state testing is not required. There are still some tests that GVP uses such as the Georgia Milestone as the standard measurement, and WIDA Access for Special English Learners. Students take the Fountas and Pinnell literacy benchmark assessment during the beginning, middle, and at the end of the school year. IXL is used as a math diagnostic test. GVP also uses formative and summative exams in the classroom with accommodations, which leads to dynamic one-on-one assessment of students.

These accommodations include extended time for test-taking, exams given orally, exams given independently, or exams supported with visual aids. Students' tests may also vary in the amount of answer options, writing space, and format of test questions. This varied approach ensures that students are given the ability to show comprehension as best support through their unique learning style. A strengths-based approach means meeting the child where they are and assessing their learning as it makes sense to them. Since the overall goal is to have these students achieve success in the public high schools and beyond, this means extensive teaching of the testing pedagogy and preparing students to manage anxiety and various technology that is involved with modern-day testing.

96%

of alumnae who complete 2 years of GVP's academic program and are matched with a mentor, continue their formal education

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Trauma Informed Practices

SEL Practices

Social and Emotional Learning practices are a large part of what makes GVP so successful. In those classes, students learn about regulating emotions, interpersonal relationships, and social awareness. GVP has a counselor who meets with students individually to provide additional support outside of SEL class. The counselor works with teachers to create a Student Study Team (SST) where accommodations can be made and progress can be monitored monthly.

Morning Meetings

Morning Meetings promote coming together as a school community every Monday and Friday. Every other day of the week, homeroom teachers conduct a Morning Meeting within their classrooms to discuss specific needs. It is an intentional part of our week to bring the girls together to interact in a mindful way. Through Morning Meetings and using restorative practices, GVP encourages community building amongst the students, and helps practice a habit and ritual of a circle.

Conflict Resolution

At GVP we observe conflicts that occur due to communication barriers, tribal differences, cultural differences, learned biases, and other common middle school challenges. A restorative practice means understanding that harm has occurred and rather than disciplining the person who has committed the harm, we work to resolve the underlying issues. Our restorative circles create a safe space for students to express themselves. The girls work with the counselor to reflect on why the harm occurred and how to resolve it in a collaborative way. Afterwards, there is a reflection period and a follow-up with the counselor to ensure that the student has kept her commitment to conflict resolution.



Handling Cultural Differences in Conflict Resolution

Steps to best handle cultural differences in conflict resolution include offering an interpreter, having older students or staff support, using the language line telephone resource for phone interpreters. It is vital to withhold judgment, be curious, and commit to restorative justice practices. Teachers and mentors are expected to build relationships and to view behavior as a form of communication.

Trauma Informed Therapies

The students have experienced trauma at some point in their lives, therefore, GVP refers students to reliable therapists for trauma informed cognitive behavioral therapy. Having predictable days, leaving room for trauma to be explored, and making students feel welcome and accepted are some of GVP's trauma informed practices.



Program Initiatives to Enhance Education

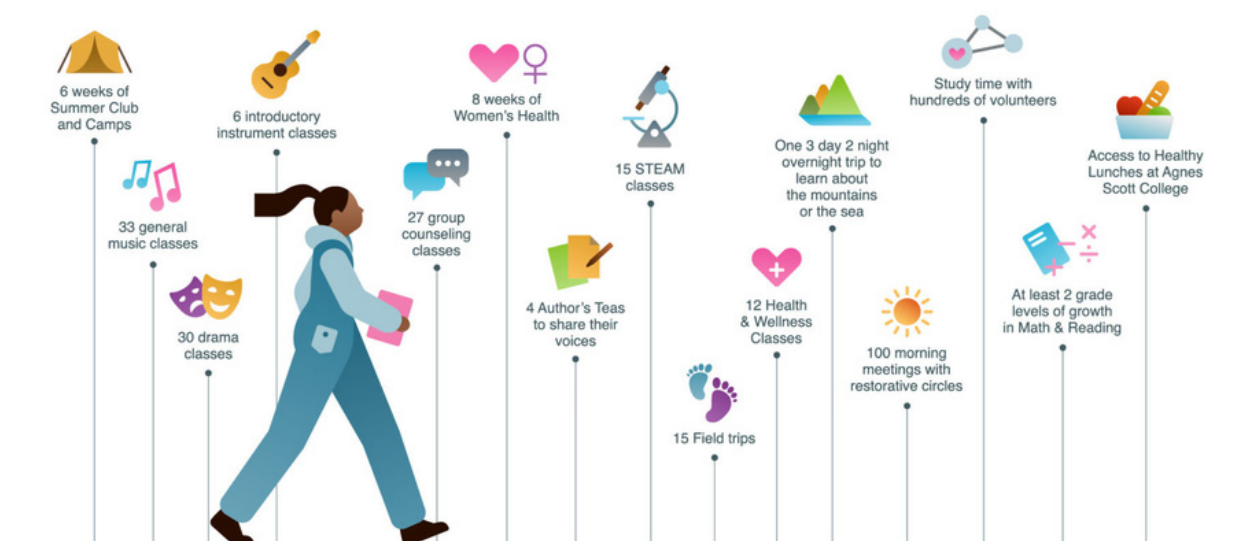
Volunteer and Mentor Programs

There are over 250 volunteers registered in the volunteer database with approximately 74 working onsite on a weekly basis. Volunteers are organized into academic opportunities or non-classroom opportunities. Prior to working with students, volunteers complete a New Volunteer Orientation to learn about the GVP model, mission, and vision. They are a vital element of student success as they support the classroom teachers and offer individual support to students throughout the day.

Volunteers assist with walking students to lunch, helping with homework during Study Hall, participate in special events, and maintain our school library. Some volunteers take part in our mentor program which requires a long-term commitment and a diverse set of needs. Interns and AmeriCorps members also devote their time and skills to support GVP.

Transportation and Lunch Program

GVP transports all students to and from school each day, free of cost. During special events, field trips, and family conferences GVP also provides transportation. Agnes Scott College has created a partnership to provide lunch for the student body. By providing these needs, without the financial burden, students and families are able to fully participate in the vision of GVP's founding board members.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Program Initiatives Committed to DEI

Family Engagement Program

Family engagement is an important piece of GVP. To encourage family involvement and support, GVP is a tuition free private school and families are asked to commit to supporting the education of the girls. A family engagement manager, Crispin Wilondja, interacts with families on a daily basis organizing and communicating various events that take place in the life of a refugee outside of school. Crispin also ensures that all students attend school when able because most family members work during school pick-up and drop-off hours. Crispin is an advocate for families and works tirelessly to ensure the families are felt included, respected, and heard.

Interpreters

Due to the diverse cultures and communities of GVP, interpreters are needed to ensure clear communication among all parties. Interpreters are found through the local refugee resettlement agencies. GVP also utilizes the Coalition of Refugee Serving Agencies, along with the IRC and New American Pathways. Language line and paid interpreters are called upon when needed to ensure clear communication.

DEI Leadership Team

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are values that GVP works to honor to create positive spaces. To increase DEI, GVP has developed several initiatives throughout the organization. From the hiring process, to training, and a DEI book club, GVP works to expand and practice the principles of DEI. This practice helps staff, students, volunteers, and others to better understand topics such as intersectionality, microaggressions, and cultural humility. The DEI leadership team, a cross-department group of faculty and staff, oversees these programs and provides training to new members.

Student Recruitment

Student recruitment occurs through partnership with the five refugee resettlement agencies in the local area. Case workers for the refugee families recommend the school to potential families. By providing local agencies with information and creating these partnerships, families are included without having to worry about navigating the educational system in a new country on their own. This helps to eliminate the boundary of access to information.

Screening Process

During the screening process there is an interview process to assess the needs of the potential students. Families are given a tour of the school and offered an interpreter to ask questions during their visit. All students are given the same assessment to ensure that the process does not cater to one potential candidate. Students are chosen by a team who assess the girls with the greatest needs.

Storytelling/Marketing

Storytelling is a crucial part of maintaining GVP's success. Misconceptions and stereotypes about the refugee community work against GVP's mission and are adverse elements of society that limit inclusion. GVP works to fight against these stereotypes by communicating what occurs within the schools' walls. Performances, community partnerships, visual marketing, and newsletters provide the greater community a window into the world of a refugee girl in America.



COURSES AND FACULTY

The table below describes the staffing and structure for the 2022-2023 school year.

Course	Description	Structure
ESOL/ELA	Students learn English language vocabulary, grammar, and other skills in writing, listening, and speaking. Units include narrative, informational, and opinion writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 teachers • classes by form • 4-5 days a week
Guided Reading	Students develop reading skills in targeted learning groups. Skills include: phonemic awareness, comprehension, text analysis, and more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 teachers • classes in small groups • 4 days a week
Math	Students learn reasoning, modeling, and discussion on subjects such as operations, algebra, geometry, and measurement. Focus is on both conceptual understanding and operational fluency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 teachers • classes by form, with form 2 split • 5 days a week • Supplemental Math Workshop class 1 day a week
Science	Students develop foundational knowledge and skills in life, earth, and physical science. Students observe, model, and construct explanations of natural phenomena.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 teacher • classes by form • 4-5 days a week

Course	Description	Structure
Social Studies	Students build foundational knowledge and skills in geography, world history, US history, civics, and government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 teachers • classes by form • 4-5 days a week
STEAM	STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) classes focus on project-based engineering design challenges. They typically align with the integrated unit of study for the semester.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 teachers • classes by form or mixed • 1 day a week
Music	Students learn English and academic content through singing. They prepare for and perform in regular performances. Instrument lessons in ukulele, piano, and drumming are also featured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Artist-in-Residence • classes by form • 1 day a week • Performances quarterly
Electives or Specials	These classes include: Playmaking for Girls (drama), visual arts, counseling, women's health, physical fitness, dance, career exploration, and more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many contract teachers • classes by form • each class 1 day a week, for either a semester or school year

INTEGRATED UNITS

Each of the following units are rotated throughout the years of operations to shape the curriculum focus for each semester. While knowledge is consistent throughout, each unit enables the students to learn new skills while also exposing them to various topics such as human rights, careers, and world history with an interactive approach.



Welcome Unit

The focus of this unit is community building. All GVP students get to know one another, learn and show the GVP Core Values, and acquire the skills necessary to be successful in school.



Codes Unit

Students explore how codes are persuasive in every content area. Students explore the use of codes in modern and ancient languages, and throughout history.



Lifeworks Unit

Students learn about women who dedicate their lives and careers to their communities as workers, leaders, and advocates.



Women's Wisdom Unit

Students honor elders in the community and celebrate the wisdom these women share. Students conduct, translate, and transcribe an interview with a woman in their community creating a performance in their honor.



Rights Unit

Students examine human rights as well as personal and societal responsibilities. All GVP students study education rights and human rights through readings and role play. They learn how individuals can bring change.



Migration Unit

Students examine human and animal migration as adaptations to changing ecosystems. They study push/pull factors, historical migrations, and the American migration. Then they write informative pieces and the end of the unit.



Habitats Unit

Students explore how habitats affect the way humans and animals live. They compare model habitats, read nonfiction texts, and research a habitat to present findings to a wider audience.



World Tales Unit

Students read and study folktales, fables, and fairytales from around the world. They study reader's theater, illustrated picture books, oral tellings, and video adaptations of the genres. Finally, they will write their own tale and act it out in front of an audience.

APPENDIX

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of all the people who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned within. We would also like to thank the following contributing members that continue to support our mission and vision:

- our growing student body
- dedicated teachers and educators
- committed staff and administration
- our valued leadership team and board members
- the financial and marketing members of our community
- our invaluable group of volunteers
- the Decatur Presbyterian Church
- local businesses and community leaders
- families of our student body
- bus drivers and maintenance staff
- new and ongoing donors who offer necessary financial support



**We thank you for
your continued
support in our
efforts to expand
the rights of
refugee girls in
Georgia**



"GVP was the first place I felt truly welcome; a place where I am not required to change to fit my environment. I can be me' and be true to myself."

- Niza, GVP Alum