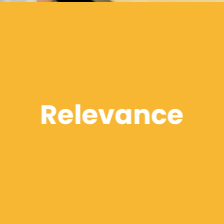


GOA



Agency



Relevance



Community



**Learning is Relational:
Designing for
Meaningful Connection**

The Pillars of Relational Learning

Relational learning begins with connection. At GOA, we know that students make meaningful, lasting connection to their learning in three key ways.



Agency

Students have voice and choice to explore what is relevant to them and the world around them. By leading with curiosity, students pursue intellectually rigorous learning experiences that help them develop their passion and purpose.



Application

Students are asked to *do something* with what they've learned. They examine real-world problems through the lens of their course, engage in inquiry-based discussions with their peers and teacher, and produce work that reflects their knowledge and critical thinking skills.



Community

Students engage in a global classroom that prioritizes collaboration and dialogue, emphasizes diverse perspective-taking, and encourages building human relationships beyond the walls of their school.



Three Essential Relationships

GOA intentionally positions relational learning at the center of each of our courses so that agency, application, and community take shape across three essential relationships.



Student ↔ Content

- Application through real-world scenarios
- Agency inspires ownership of learning
- Inquiry-based approach builds purpose and relevance



Student ↔ Student

- Dialogue across differences
- Collaboration beyond the traditional boundaries of school
- Perspective-taking as a daily practice



Student ↔ Teacher

- Teachers as coaches and content experts
- Essential questions, timely feedback, and active presence
- Trust through empathy, consistency, and genuine connection

What This Looks Like at GOA

Intentional course design shapes how deeply students engage with what they're learning. GOA's design principles ensure consistent, outcomes-driven, relational learning experiences for every student.



Center on Purposeful, Global Learning

Ground content in real-world, globally relevant contexts to foster perspective-taking and meaningful application.



Prioritize Application-Based Assessments

Design tasks that ask students to do something with what they've learned—solve, explain, create, critique, transfer.



Foster Student Agency through Self-Directed Inquiry

Offer choice, encourage voice, and design open-ended tasks that allow students to pursue their interests and questions.



Position the Teacher as Coach

Guide learning through feedback, presence, and strategic interventions—supporting students without directing every step.



Build Community Through Relationships and Global Connections

Encourage interaction with peers, cross-school collaboration, and awareness of diverse perspectives.

"[At GOA,] we lean into the relationship, fostering a collaborative space. We design courses where success depends on being meaningfully human: applying ideas in real contexts, making and defending choices, collaborating, reflecting on process, and creating work that evolves over time."

—Sarah Prosory, GOA Associate Director of Learning Design



Relational Learning in Action

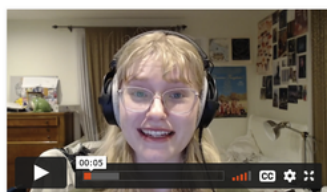
GOA's culminating Global Capstone brings agency, application, and community into practice as students apply their learning to real-world topics that matter to them. Through research, analysis, and formative feedback, they deepen their understanding, build critical skills, and recognize their impact.

Through the Global Capstone, students:



"The most inspiring part of creating my [Global Capstone] project was recognizing that through psychological reasoning and in-depth research, I could tackle a pressing issue that is meaningful to both me and my community. It further solidified that psychology is something that I want to pursue in college and beyond and that I can use my education in service to others."

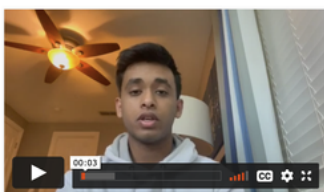
—Cece L., Dalton School



Mira S. - The Downtown School

Global Online Academy

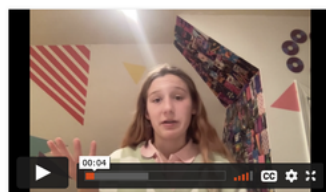
"How could the language in my school's rules be updated to be more inclusive towards religion?" Lin...



Akhil P. - Head-Royce School

Global Online Academy

"How can the distrustful relationship between marginalized Americans and the healthcare...



Anni Y. - Lakeside School

Global Online Academy

"How can a sense of personal purpose and the act of slowing things down help students in competitive...

How Do We Know It Works?

When we prioritize relational learning in both course design and facilitation, our students feel known and valued, and the learning feels relevant and purposeful. As a result, they gain the confidence needed to take intellectual risks that reflect deeper connection and stronger critical-thinking skills.

Brookings Institution and Transcend's 2025 research agrees with these outcomes: "[W]hen students have the autonomy to make decisions, even if small, over their learning ... they develop a sense of control that is motivating and satisfies the psychological need to be an author of our experience."

They also show up clearly in the GOA student experience:

95%

of GOA students
say their course is
intellectually engaging

93%

say their GOA course
**enhanced their overall
academic experience**

(GOA student survey data)

"GOA courses are not about handing in assignments for grading. You get to dive into real topics, collaborate with students worldwide, and expand your thinking while helping others grow too."

—Virginia, Marymount International
School of Rome, GOA Student Ambassador



What Are People Saying?



“GOA provides our students with an increased level of autonomy over their learning. Many of our students use GOA to ascertain whether the courses they are taking might be a possible future area of study... Our students identified that when learning is relevant and authentic, they experience higher levels of engagement. The GOA courses are just that—relevant and authentic.”

—Brett Penny, Director, American International School of Budapest



“It was really different to be able to work with students in an academic environment rather than just a social one... That really made me excited about meeting more people from the global community, especially because Yale has a lot of international students that are coming from all over the world. I think GOA really helped me develop the communication skills that I currently have so that I can really better connect with people.”

—Zoey, Punahou School graduate, current Yale University student

Let GOA Help

Schools that partner with GOA go beyond just expanding course offerings. Member schools invest in experiences where students feel engaged, connected, and inspired to extend their learning beyond the classroom.

Schedule a quick call

GOA is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization founded and run by educators that reimagines learning to empower students and educators to thrive in a globally networked society.



<https://globalonlineacademy.org>



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G O A

**Passion-based. Mission-driven.
Learner-centered.**

