

# Round Square at GNS



*Learn leadership skills, jump into service opportunities, be a global citizen!*

GNS is proud to be a member of the Round Square, a worldwide network of innovative schools in 40 countries across five continents that follow a unique, educational philosophy that supports students on their journey to becoming well-rounded adults.

The Round Square philosophy emphasizes learning by doing as our students grow to be responsible global citizens who value academics, welcome diverse ideologies, respect cultural and spiritual differences and recognize their role in shaping a harmonious planet.

Round Square schools fulfil this commitment by living according to the IDEALS—International understanding, Democracy, Environmental stewardship, outdoor Adventure, Leadership and Service. Students attending Round Square schools make a strong commitment, beyond academic excellence, to personal development and responsibility. As part of this enriching, values-based education, students spearhead campaigns, take part in community service, and participate in exchange programs and conferences, which can, and frequently do, take them around the world and open their minds and hearts to new ideas and ways of life.

## *Round Square Experiences*

Each year, students have an opportunity to apply to be delegates representing GNS at a variety of regional and international Round Square conferences and service projects.

## **Background Information on the Round Square Conference Program**

The International and Regional Round Square Conferences are hosted at Round Square schools annually. To the International Round Square Conference, each Round Square School usually sends a delegation, including students, the Senior Round Square Coordinator, and the Head of School. To the

Americas Regional Round Square Conference, all Round Square schools in the North and South Americas region send delegations.

Both conferences offer forums for these delegates to celebrate and discuss the pillars of the Round Square (the IDEALS). Most delegates are within the ages of 15 to 18, with a recent push in Round Square schools to send mature 16 year olds. These are intellectual and active conferences; all delegates need to be ready to listen to and to discuss ideas, and also to socialize and adventure with other delegates from around the world. Two years after the conference to Thailand in 2010 a GNS delegate wrote, "Looking back at my experience at the Round Square Conference, I know I can say that hearing the ideas/insights and stories of so many diverse youth and adults has changed me irrevocably for the better. The days were long and intense, but also incredibly enriching and powerful. The hardest part of the whole conference was leaving my new friends." Reflecting on RS12 in Kenya, a student reported "These were the best three weeks of my life so far; I am so lucky to be able to travel the world safely and connect with so many amazing people."

## **Student Responsibilities**

Before even applying to attend, students need to reflect on their school responsibilities. Both conferences take place at busy times of the year, when many school activities are getting started (October) or are wrapping up (late April). Missing classes and co-curricular activities for an average time of two weeks, comes with some concern at the senior level, especially for IB students. This concern has developed from watching students return from the conference with great ideas and plans, but due to over-commitment, be unable to implement them or share them with the larger school community. It is the hope of the school administration and Round Square Coordinators that the student delegates come home from the conference with a project plan that encourages the IDEALS in the GNS community. An example could be learning about a local service project at another school, and implementing, with help, a similarly inspired project here.

*"The Mexico Service Project and the 2011 Round Square Conference were two of the best experiences of my life so far! Thank you!"*

*– Elspeth McGillivray '12*

*"I would 100% recommend an exchange to any students who are interested. You may think that you don't want to leave your friends at GNS or you don't want to miss your sports, but when you put things into perspective, high school is the perfect time to go experience the world. "*

*– Chris Graham '19*

Financially, students and their families are responsible to pay for airfare, a possible post or pre-trip excursion and pocket money. GNS is responsible to pay for the conference fees. Students are encouraged to fundraise in their community to help offset the cost. For example, to go to Australia for the Round Square Conference in 2011, a student delegate raised \$1000 by hosting a series of dinners to offset the \$3000 total personal cost.

## Round Square International Service Projects

Round Square International Service Projects are for students ages 16 and up. Round Square has been running International Service Projects since 1953. Since then, Round Square Schools have worked on projects in Ladakh, Kenya, Romania, Guatemala and Cambodia helping communities in need and allowing young people from around the globe to grow and develop important life-long skills.

Each year Round Square hosts two unique RSIS Big Build service projects for 50 students from Round Square Schools. The projects take place every year in July and December and run (on average) for two weeks. GNS can send up to two ambassadors to each project; they fill up fast!

## RSIS Big Build Projects

Under the banner of "The Round Square Big Build," these International Service Projects, which take place annually in July and December, see 50 students from diverse Round Square Schools working with local communities around the world. This year, RSIS Big Build Ecuador took place in July 2018, and RSIS Big Build Sri Lanka is set to take place in December 2018. Both projects are full at this time with three GNS students able to participate in each.

For your consideration of future Big Builds, these projects are suitable for students ages 16 to 19, and very much focus on leadership skill building. Participants take it in turns to be Student Leaders during the project, taking responsibility for the organization of the day, briefing their peers, giving an overview of safety and risk management, and organizing a student rota to help with different chores at camp. Students are given feedback by their peers and the adult leaders, and all receive a personal report after the trip.



For more information about the Round Square opportunities at Glenlyon Norfolk School, please contact:  
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<http://www.mygns.ca/gryphon-life/round-square>