

Reflection on the Teacher Study Tour to the Republic of Georgia

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Participating in the Teacher Study Tour to the Republic of Georgia was a profoundly enriching experience that has significantly impacted me both personally and professionally. As an educator with a passion for international exchange and the transformative power of global learning, I was amazed by the depth of economic understanding among Georgian students and the innovation within their school system—especially given Georgia’s relatively recent transition from a former Soviet republic. This journey not only broadened my global perspective but also inspired meaningful plans for collaboration and curriculum enhancement at Brookfield Academy.

One of the most striking aspects of the trip was the opportunity to observe how Georgia, despite its complex political and economic history, has cultivated a strong foundation in economic education. Students were confidently discussing entrepreneurship, market dynamics, and global trade and engaging in topics with a maturity and depth that were truly impressive. These conversations were led by dedicated teachers who are actively helping students develop critical thinking and real-world problem-solving skills through business pitch competitions and entrepreneurial projects.

During school visits, I connected with several of these teachers, forming relationships that will continue beyond this tour. We plan to coordinate Zoom sessions between our students twice a year, enabling cross-cultural exchange, collaborative learning, and shared projects. These interactions will allow students from both countries to develop their global competencies, compare their economic systems, and understand how entrepreneurship is approached in different contexts.

These connections are particularly valuable to me in my role at Brookfield Academy, where I help guide students through our International Freedom Scholars Program. The mission of Brookfield Academy is to graduate students prepared for college and life, educated in the skills, values, and heritage of responsible, constructive, free people. Consistent with the belief in basic education, Brookfield Academy’s International Freedom Scholars program seeks to empower graduates to compete, contribute, and thrive in tomorrow’s society. This unique program challenges students to select a global issue of interest, conduct primary research in at least three

different countries, write an in-depth 15-page research paper, and present their findings to our board of directors. The faculty and student connections I established in Georgia offer exciting new possibilities for these scholars. With access to local perspectives, academic mentorship from professors like Dr. Natia Tsiklashvili at Batumi State University and Dr. Vakhtang Charaia at Grigol Robakidze University, and collaborative partnerships with Georgian high school students, our scholars can now explore economic, political, and cultural questions with firsthand support from their international peers.

These relationships will open new doors for our students to explore areas such as post-Soviet economic transition, entrepreneurship in emerging markets, and educational reform in developing democracies. Whether it's through surveys, interviews, or collaborative case studies, the opportunity to conduct primary research in the Republic of Georgia represents a major expansion of the resources and support available to our scholars. This will significantly elevate the quality and authenticity of their research.

On a personal level, this experience reminded me of why I became an educator. Being immersed in Georgia's culture, hospitality, and history offered a powerful reminder of the importance of context in teaching economics. I was struck by how Georgian educators teach not just theory, but also resilience, innovation, and a forward-looking mindset. Their ability to engage students in meaningful dialogue about real-world challenges, especially in a society still navigating its post-Soviet identity, was both humbling and inspiring.

In addition to student collaboration, I am also excited to bring what I've learned into my own classroom. I plan to integrate case studies from Georgia into our economics curriculum, allowing students to explore themes like privatization, regulatory reform, and trade liberalization in the context of an emerging democracy. These examples will help students connect theoretical models to real-world scenarios and encourage them to think globally when analyzing economic systems.

To share the benefits of this experience more widely, I will host a professional development session for my colleagues at Brookfield Academy. This session will explore the Georgian

education system, highlight innovative teaching strategies, and encourage fellow educators to think about how they can integrate global perspectives into their classrooms.

This study tour also reminded me of past international experiences that have shaped my teaching. When I led student trips to Japan in 2017 and 2023, I saw how the Japanese educational system nurtures community-mindedness and environmental responsibility. Teachers in Japan used creativity and culturally relevant examples to tie local issues to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, providing an inspiring model of integrated education. My experience in Georgia similarly reinforced the importance of grounding lessons in students own lives, and where they live, while also connecting them to global contexts.

Ultimately, the Teacher Study Tour to the Republic of Georgia was not just a professional development trip—it was a transformative experience that reaffirmed my belief in the power of global education. The knowledge, inspiration, and connections I gained will benefit my students, my colleagues, and our wider school community. Most importantly, this trip helped me see even more clearly that fostering international collaboration and cultural understanding is not only an enriching addition to education, but also essential to preparing our students to thrive in an interconnected world.