

Model UN

What is Model UN?

Model UN is an extracurricular activity done by young people all over the world and is extremely popular and competitive at the university level. More recently, Model UN has become common at the middle and high school level as both an academic club, as an elective, and as part of a social studies course.

Why do Model UN?

Participating in Model UN challenges students in ways beyond the hurdles of international relations terminology and rigorous topic and country research. To engage, students must present speeches to a group of peers, incorporate the ideas of others into extemporaneous remarks, develop and write proposals, work in an unstructured environment to find allies, and use parliamentary procedure.

The discussions are rigorous and solutions-oriented, with the ultimate goal of developing a proposal that a majority of the countries can agree upon. As a result, students gain a nuanced understanding of the global issue that they are discussing and the countries represented, heightened communication skills, and new reflections on the world and their own stance.

The social and academic skills embedded in Model UN make it a rich and engaging learning experience. Students are inherently excited to participate in this meaningful work and by having fun while learning about the world and gaining skills for school, future work, and life!

Who is involved Model UN?

There is a robust Model UN community in Massachusetts with numerous middle school, high school, and college conferences throughout the school year. A small sample of Model UN conference hosts in the area include:

Model UN: Definition and Rationale

What is Model UN?

Model UN is an opportunity for students to engage in a simulation of an actual United Nations committee meeting as international delegates representing member nations. Students participate in discussion and negotiation to develop resolutions in an attempt to find realistic solutions to some of the most challenging issues in the world today. The students who participate in this program begin by forming delegate pairs who will work together as a team to represent a nation that will be assigned to them. They will also be placed in one of several committees that mirror the actual organizations of the United Nations. Each committee has a topic or real world issue that at one point has been or is currently facing the United Nations. Over a period of time the students will research the topic, their countries position on the topic, and develop potential solutions to the issue that will benefit their country as well as other nations they are attempting to collaborate with. During the preparation time prior to a conference, the students must develop position papers, opening speeches, debate points, and potential solutions. They also work to learn as much as possible about the topic or issue they are presented with. As the students prepare they develop and sharpen their public speaking, negotiation, writing and critical thinking skills through constant practice, repetition, and revision. There are a variety of exercises and activities we engage in to help the students develop these skills to a higher level. The students also learn about the procedure and rules of civilized discussion and debate. At the completion of all their preparation, the students attend a conference which is an all day, accurate simulation of a United Nations meeting. Other students from other Model UN programs attend and participate in the simulation in an attempt to create and pass resolutions on behalf of the countries they represent. Students also have the ability to win awards during the conference for outstanding achievement in certain areas.

What is the value?

The values of this program are numerous. It requires students to employ a wide variety of skills. These skills include research, persuasive writing supported by evidence, creative thinking, negotiation, collaboration, public speaking, utilization of advanced vocabulary and academic material, compromise, and understanding of multiple points of view. It also helps the students to develop valuable character traits such as determination, compassion, focus, self confidence, civil discourse, teamwork, time management and several more. These skills and traits will not only serve the students well in their academic careers, but in the real world as well once their education is complete. I have personally witnessed tangible improvements in the writing and speaking skills of the students who participate in my program. I have also had

students indicate to me that they have seen improvements in themselves and their abilities because of the practice they received and work they did through Model UN.

What is the potential of this program?

It would be my hope to see this program expanded into all of the district's middle and high schools and create a true district wide program. It would not only strengthen numerous areas of the curriculum through real life practicing of vital skills but would also afford the opportunity for increased participation in Model UN events in our local area. Currently, there are very few Model UN events in Central Massachusetts due to the small number of programs in the area. If Worcester, the second largest school district in Massachusetts, were to develop a system wide program, more events could be planned in cooperation with our numerous local colleges and universities as partners in this pursuit. Most Model UN events currently being offered are sponsored by colleges and universities in the Metro Boston area. The district would also have the ability to host it's own Model UN events or run events within the district that would be available to only Worcester schools and students. The possibilities with a comprehensive and active Model UN program district wide are numerous indeed, as are the benefits to our students.