

# Model UN provides platform for local students to discuss global issues

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Brian Krieger's world history class at Ashland High School received a grant from the Ashland Community Foundation to incorporate Model United Nations his classroom. The honors students recently completed a United Nations simulation on the Syrian refugee crisis and were working on a simulation for gender equality in STEM fields on Wednesday. - Noelle Bye, Times-Gazette.com

Ashland High School students tackled gender inequality issues with open debate as they took on the roles of United Nations delegates.

Brian Krieger, an AHS social studies teacher, **received a \$300 grant from the Ashland County Community Foundation** to participate in Model United Nations program in three of his honors world history classes.

MUN is organized by the United Nations Association of the United States of America and allows students to “step into the shoes of ambassadors of countries that are members of the UN,” according to the UNA-USA website.

The topics are based on current events and student delegates must create a resolution as an individual country or work with other global entities through negotiations and conflict.

Krieger's students previously discussed the Syrian refugee crisis before they shifted their focus to gender inequality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

“It's kind of shown around the world that there's a disparity, sometimes as high as 50, 60, 70 percent,” Krieger said. “The UN's kind of working on plans: how can they get more women around the world into STEM fields? How can they create some programs to encourage them?”

Students chose the country they wanted to represent and had to research current trends and opinions in their country on a specific topic.

“Normally, when it comes to whether or not it’s the country’s or your own personal feelings ... I intend to pick a country that I know has similar views to me,” said sophomore Maiyah Lewis, who represented Myanmar.

The students began the debate with opening statements on whether their chosen country felt the gender inequality in STEM careers was prevalent.

A block group formed by Luxembourg, the Netherlands, India and Myanmar recognized it as an international issue. Block members proposed providing reliable primary education to girls as a stepping stone to continued education and careers in STEM. They also suggested offering incentives such as childcare and equal pay to encourage more women into the field.

In opposition to this block was a group composed of the U.S., China, Japan and Costa Rica. Sophomore Kayin McDonald said though women may have experienced segregation in STEM in the past, the current gender difference did not pose a crisis.

McDonald believed women, especially in the U.S., had opportunities to pursue careers in STEM but chose not to. He proposed introducing STEM to young female students to let them decide earlier in their education if they wanted to pursue a career in that field.

AHS is the only school in the region participating in MUN, but Krieger expressed hope that more districts would join the program.

“I think maybe a couple years down the road, if we could talk to Lexington or Wooster, some of the schools within our conference, I think that would be really cool,” Krieger said.

“I really enjoy doing this because I feel like a lot of times, you don’t get the opportunity to talk about these big issues with people,” McDonald said. “I just really like being able to actually give an opinion and people are actually going to listen to it.”

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