



2020–2021 Global Smarts Mentoring Program Year-End Report



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The **Global Smarts Mentoring Program** is an award-winning program that was developed in 2012 with the aim of “leveling the playing field” for middle school students from under-resourced schools participating in the Council’s Student Diplomat Program / Jr. Model United Nations. It is a rigorous global literacy tutoring program **pairing 6-8th grade students from under-resourced Philadelphia public, parochial and charter schools with collegiate mentors from local universities**. Through weekly individual and small-group instruction with their assigned middle school site, mentors provide students with the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to confidently participate in the Council’s annual, region-wide Student Diplomat Program/Jr. Model United Nations Program.

To meet program objectives, beginning in January and continuing through May, undergraduate student mentors from **Saint Joseph’s University** and **Temple University** met weekly with Global Smarts students for **60-75-minute virtual sessions** either during or after school. The overarching educational goal was to help students develop the core knowledge and skills required to successfully participate in the Council’s region-wide Jr. Model United Nations (Jr. MUN) Conference, including researching assigned countries and global issues, writing position papers, drafting and amending resolutions, and debating and defending final policy arguments. This year, emphasis was also placed on secondary “soft skills” including public speaking, rhetoric, and peer leadership. Additionally, mentors attended weekly, virtual **professional development sessions** with the Council’s education staff to review teaching strategies and to assess student progress and challenges. Mentors also completed several intensive research assignments in addition to viewing and/or attending a minimum of two Council speaker programs.

ADAPTING TO THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

For the first eight years of the Global Smarts Mentoring Program, collegiate mentors worked on site within a middle school classroom with students in individual and small group settings. This year, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, **the Global Smarts Mentoring Program shifted to weekly 45-60 minute virtual sessions** where mentors and students could meet safely while continuing to learn.

With many extracurricular programs cancelled or postponed, including arts-based programs and after-school sports, the Global Smarts Mentoring Program took on a greater importance in the lives and quality of education of our students. While the program kept a number of core educational goals intact this year, program designers also placed a greater importance on



interpersonal connection and mentoring, giving students and mentors an opportunity to connect, learn, and have fun. The added emphasis on interpersonal connection and communications led to strong, empathetic relationships, even in the challenging virtual mentorship setting.

The move to a virtual program also forced World Affairs Council staff and the collegiate mentors to rework previously established in-person curriculum and activities. Greater focus was placed on identifying student needs, and providing a fun, exciting space for students to explore and discuss critical global issues. Through these revised activities, mentors focused on improving students' communications skills, practicing their public speaking, debate, and rhetoric. Mentors were also tasked with adapting lesson plans to meet student interests, specifically designing lessons around the culture, food, and social media practices, among other topics, of their countries of study. This strategic change in program design allowed students to participate in cultural learning, while utilizing important digital tools.

2020-2021 JR. MODEL UNITED NATIONS TOPIC

Ensuring Healthy Lives and Promoting Well-Being for All

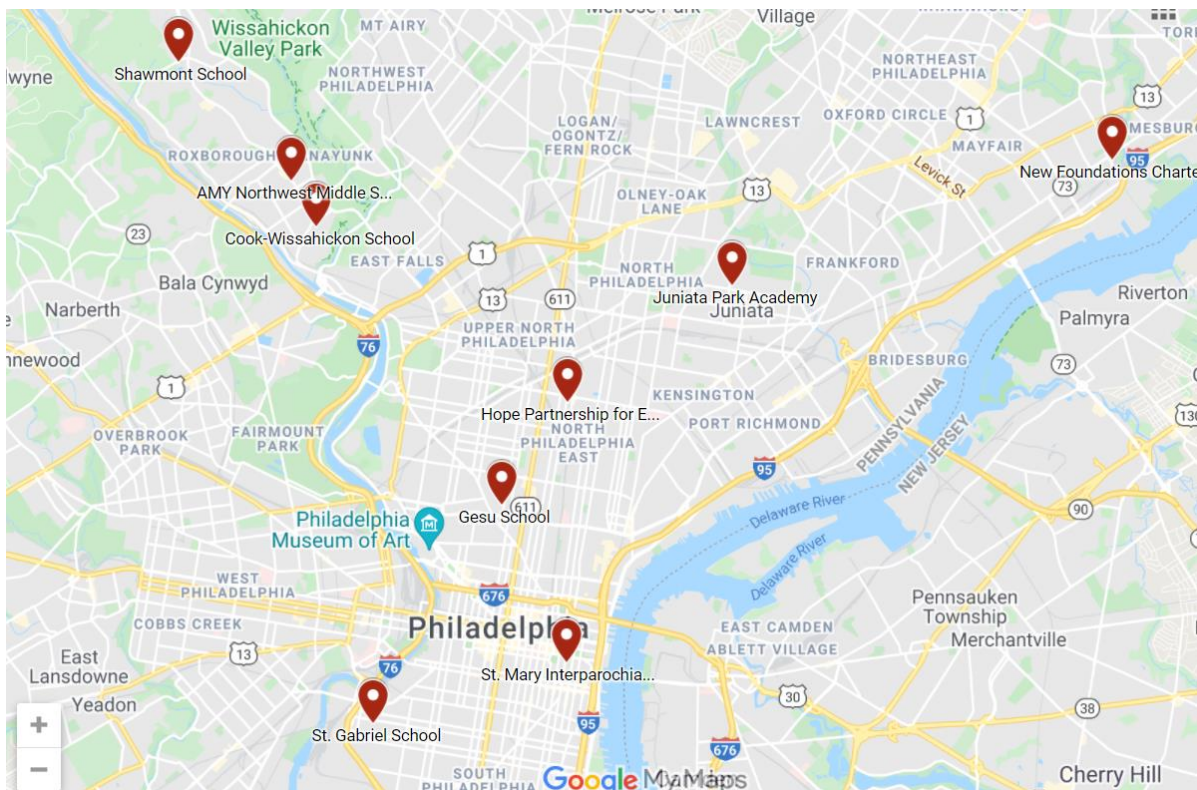
Each year, World Affairs Council staff selects a conference topic of global importance connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as a roadmap for global peace and prosperity. This year, Council staff elected to focus on the critical issue of public health, focusing specifically on **SDG #3, Promoting Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All**. This topic, while closely connected to the ongoing pandemic, also allowed for significant debate and conversation on a host of public health issues found throughout the world. Students were able to explore various topics of public health based on their unique country of study, including the effects of pollutants and toxins on air and water quality, maternal and neonatal healthcare, communicative infectious diseases, and the importance of mental health, especially in children and adolescents. Mentors adeptly framed these topics, and helped students explore and understand the connections between public health, development, and sustainability. Council staff, mentors, and faculty advisers were all thoroughly impressed with the care, diligence, and empathy with which students approached these difficult topics.

SCHOOLS SERVED

In its ninth year, the Global Smarts Mentoring Program served **189 students attending nine public and parochial schools** in Philadelphia. The Global Smarts program saw eight returning

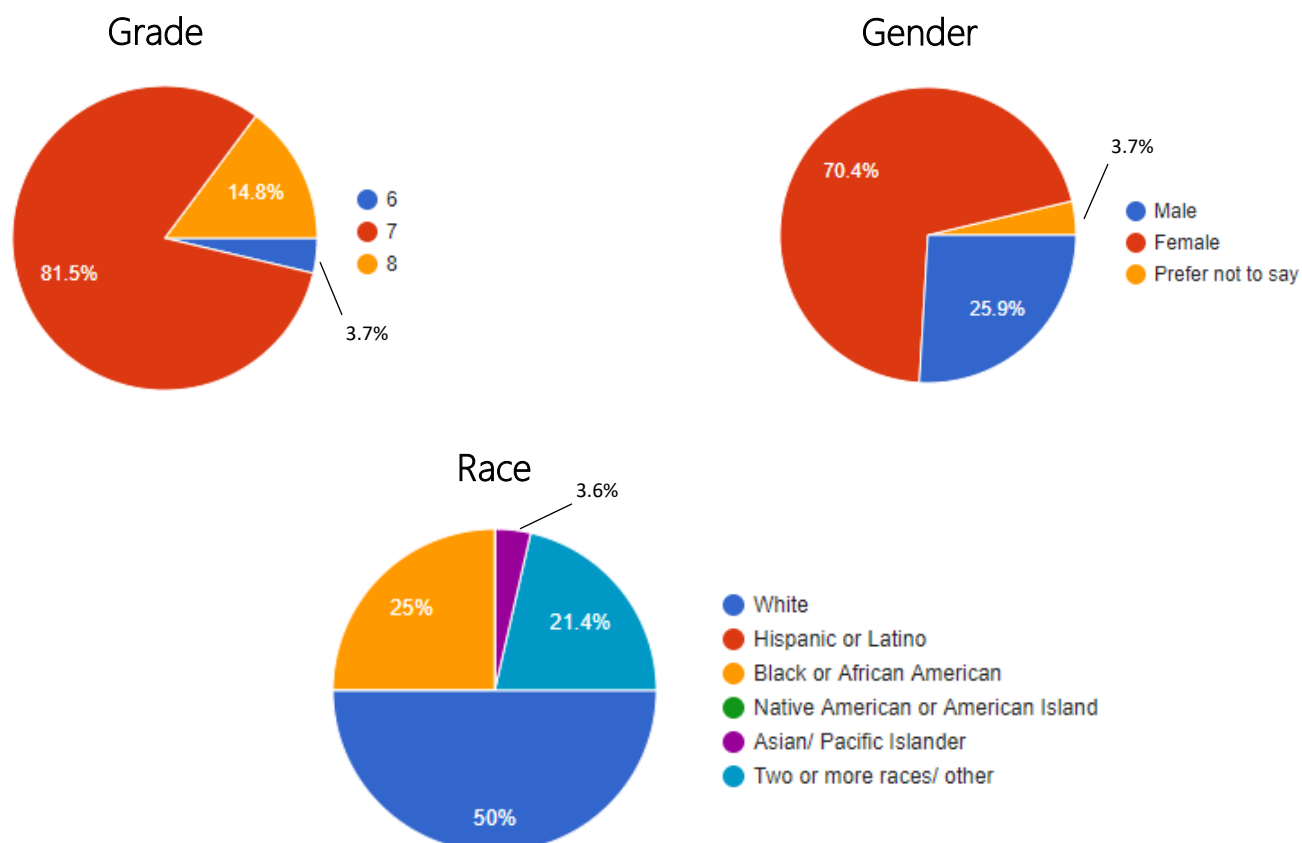


schools—**A.M.Y. Northwest**, **Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School**, and **Shawmont Middle School** from the Manayunk-Roxborough neighborhoods; **Gesu School** and **Hope Partnership for Education** located in North Philadelphia; **St. Gabriel's Middle School** and **St. Mary's Interparochial School** from South Philadelphia; and **New Foundations Charter School** located in Northeast Philadelphia — where the program was able to grow and serve a larger cohort of students. This year, Global Smarts onboarded one new school to the program, **Juniata Park Academy** located in the Juniata neighborhood of Northeast Philadelphia. All nine of our partner schools are located in Philadelphia County, and are designated as Title I schools where a majority of the student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch. The following map shows the location of all 9 participating schools:





OUR STUDENTS



OUR MENTORS

In response to the pandemic, program designers opted to recruit a greater number of mentors than in years past, lowering our student-to-mentor ratio. The 2020-2021 Global Smarts Program employed 33 collegiate mentors, 28 from Saint Joseph's University, and 5 from Temple University, creating a 5:1 student to mentor ratio. The 28 students from St. Joseph's University were also enrolled in a peace-studies and service-learning course run by Dr. Lisa Baglione, Professor of Political Science, exploring the critical role of international institutions and global conflict. The five Temple University students held dual roles, serving as both Global Smarts



mentors and as Council interns, working in the Education, Programs, Membership, and Travel departments.

The 33 Global Smarts mentors were selected from a strong applicant pool. Most of our mentors were upperclassmen pursuing international relations, global studies, or international business majors. This year's cohort had students representing significant geographical, racial, and gender diversity. The intentional selection of this year's cohort brought together a talented group of students with diverse backgrounds, interests, and career paths giving our middle school students access to a range of lived experiences. The diversity, intellect, and maturity of this year's cohort led to significant positive outcomes for students and mentors alike.

Due to challenges of this year, Council staff invited four mentors, each from Saint Joseph's University, to return as mentors for a second year of service. These returning mentors brought significant programmatic knowledge and served as peer-leaders for this year's cohort of new mentors. The returning mentors were able to add context to the program structure and were able to coach the first-year mentors through classroom challenges. Ultimately, the decision to bring back four mentors as peer-leaders was a significant success and will be a critical part of program design in future years.

CHALLENGES

The global pandemic and the move to virtual learning created significant challenges for students, teachers, mentors, and the education system at large. In past years, our mentors benefitted greatly from their relationship with and personal connection to the faculty advisers at our partner schools. These relationships would create a space for faculty advisers to support mentors, boosting their confidence and allowing our mentors to fold into the school culture with ease. In a virtual setting, teachers and mentors had greater difficulty establishing these connections and integrating into school and classroom culture.

In addition to the challenges of establishing a programmatic culture, technical difficulties plagued teachers and students throughout the year. While the city of Philadelphia met its goal of a 1:1 laptop-to-student ratio, internet connection issues created continuity problems in classrooms around the city. Additionally, video communication software such as Zoom and Google Meets force a disjointed communication system, a significant departure from the collaborative group sessions with which we have found success in previous academic years.

Anecdotally, we had students report their frustration over connectivity issues, dropped calls, and poor audio and video quality. Our mentors strove to limit these technological issues, and focused

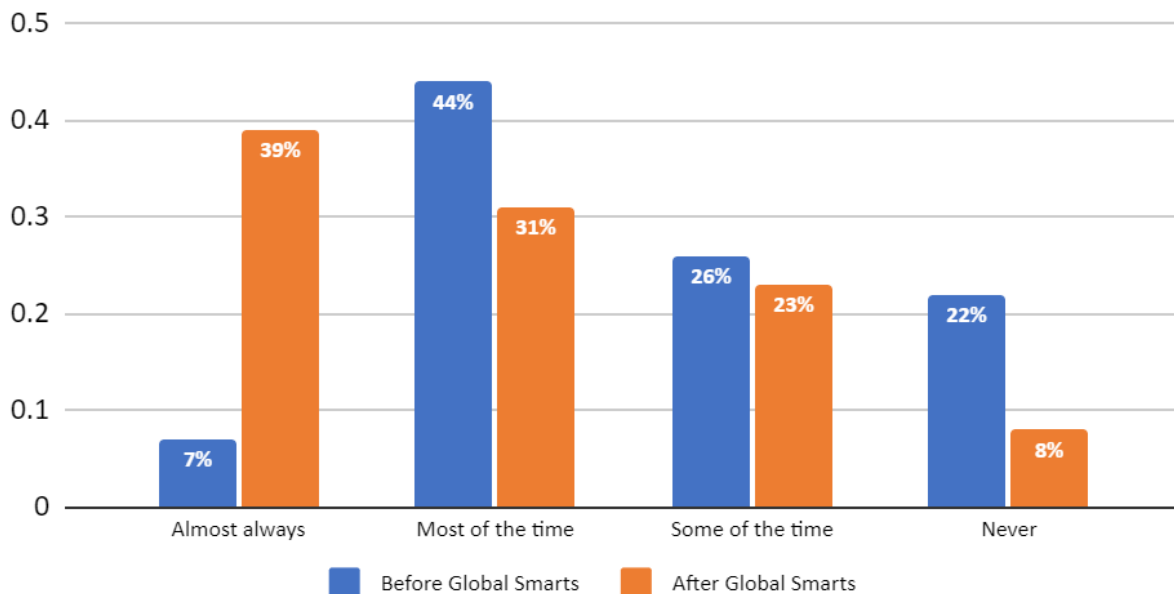


on creating positive, empathetic, and compassionate spaces for our students to learn and grow. While there were many challenges this year, our mentors consistently approached each session with positivity and a student-focused mindset, allowing our programs to run with minimal interruption.

SUCCESSES

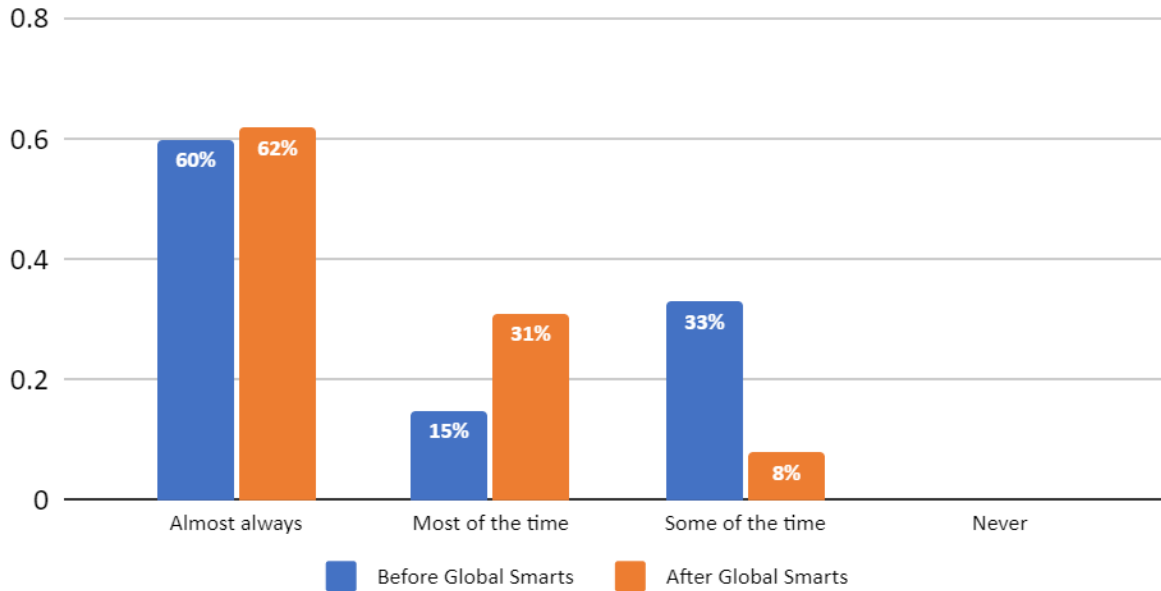
While the virtual learning space created challenges for teachers, mentors and program designers, this year's program also saw notable successes especially in the students' understanding of cultural appreciation, diversity in viewpoints, geography, and the role of the United Nations. The program's foremost curricular goal was to have students gain an understanding of and appreciation for global cultures. Through self-evaluation, students reported significant increases in their understanding of cultural backgrounds and interest in learning multiple viewpoints on an issue:

When I hear about something happening in the news, I try to find different points of view before forming an opinion on it.

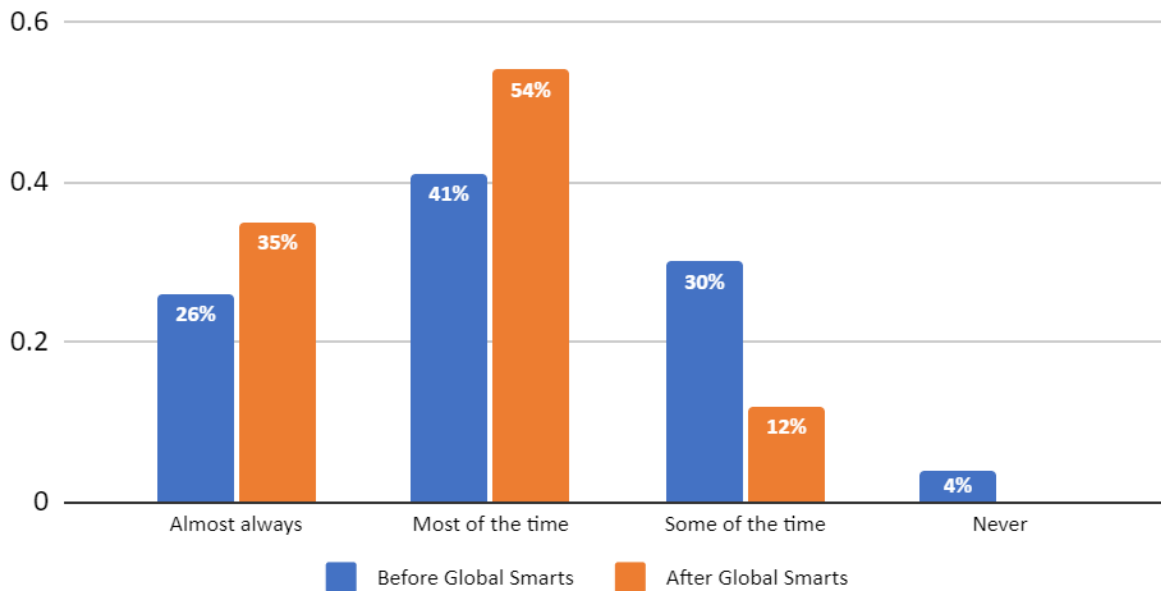




I am aware of how my personal experiences and background impact how I see the world.

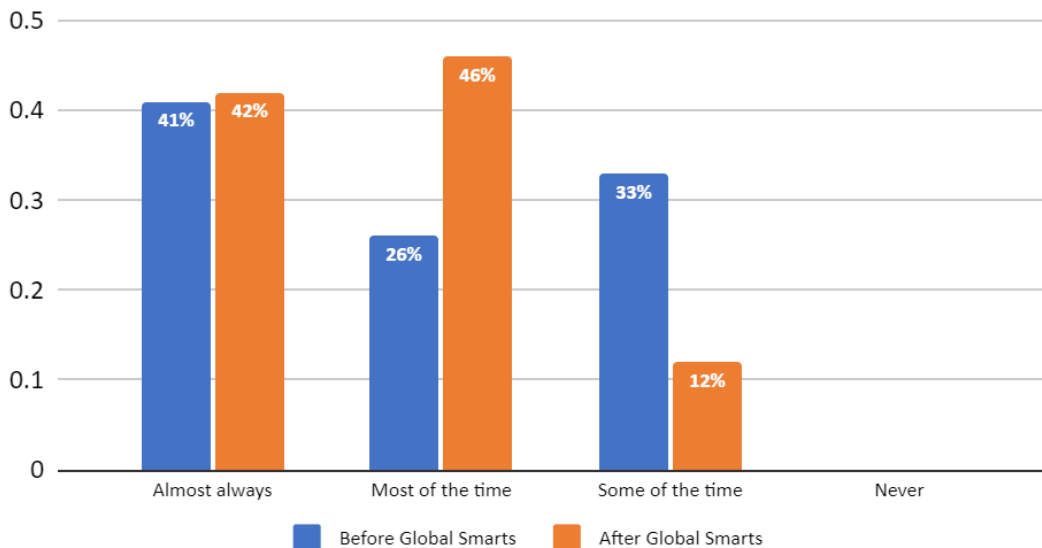


I try to understand the perspectives of other people even if I disagree.



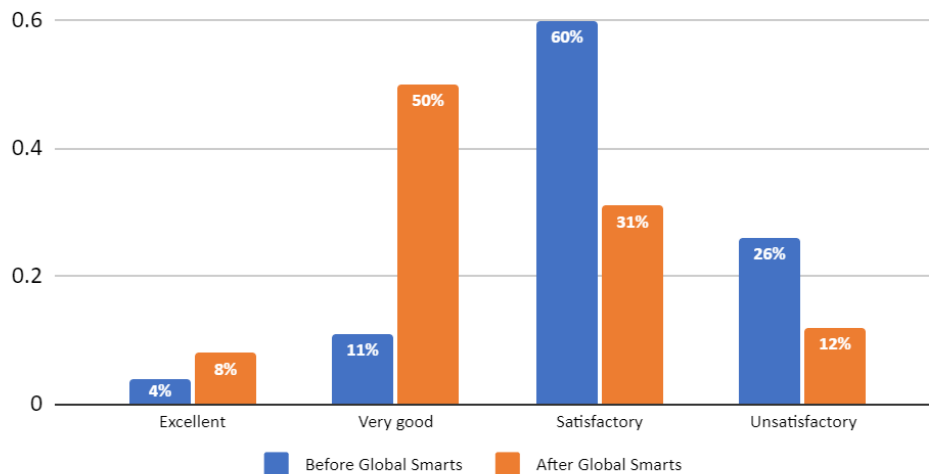


When I work with others in a group, I try to be aware of the different ways we communicate and adapt to make sure everyone feels included.



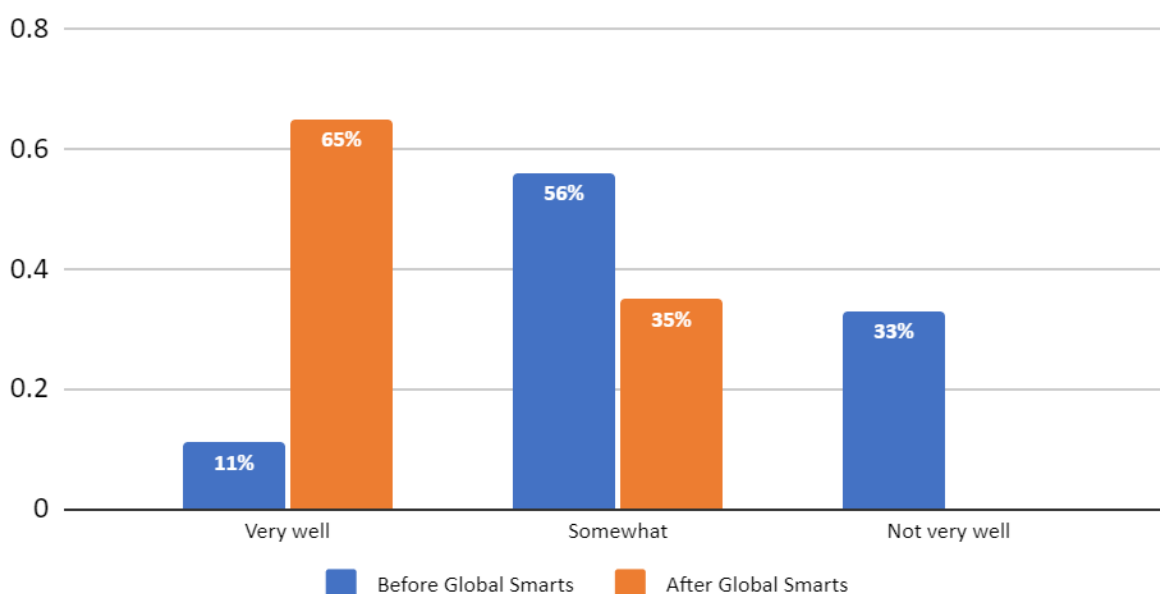
While the program prioritizes cultural understanding and appreciation, students also walked away with significant growth in their understanding of geography and the United Nations. Much of this growth could be attributed to Mentors “Country in Focus” activities, in which the collegiate Mentors would give a brief introduction to the arts, culture, music and food of a nation, with the idea of exposing students to global cultures. Students thoroughly enjoyed these activities, with students reporting significant increases in geographical knowledge and the purpose of the United Nations.

I would rate my ability to identify countries and landmarks on a map as:





I can explain to others what the United Nations is and why countries belong to it.



In addition to the outstanding growth and development from our students this year, Global Smarts students, representing all nine partner schools, walked away from the Jr. Model UN Final Conference winning a total of **34 individual awards**. These awards, which were conferred by third-party facilitators and collegiate Model UN co-chairs, recognized students for their outstanding preparation and performance during the program. While students' performances cannot be wholly quantified through award recognition, mentors, faculty advisers, and program staff were thrilled to see such significant accomplishments from Global Smarts students during such a challenging year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEKLY ZOOM MEETINGS

Core to the Global Smarts Mentoring Program are weekly professional development sessions between Education Department staff and the collegiate mentors. While many of the mentors have worked with children in either academic or non-academic settings, most of our mentors are not education majors. Council-led professional development sessions allow not only for community building within our cohort of mentors, but also allow program designers the opportunity to train and upskill the collegiate mentors in basic educational pedagogy. These



sessions took on even greater importance as virtual education requires a unique set of skills and experiences.

During these sessions, mentors were provided with weekly lesson plans and materials for their students. Council staff walked mentors through the lessons, highlighting important educational goals and expectations. In addition, Council staff provided an opportunity for mentors to discuss highlights and challenges encountered in the classroom. Returning mentors were vital in workshopping potential solutions to classroom issues including improving attendance and establishing a program culture in the partner school. Mentors also had the opportunity to hear from a variety of guest speakers, who provided key pedagogical insights. One guest speaker, the Associate Director of Academics at Alliance for Catholic Education at Saint Joseph's University, Elizabeth Gallagher, led sessions focused on the educational landscape of Philadelphia and trauma-informed teaching, critical subjects in a COVID-affected school year.

MENTOR MOCK MODEL UN

Part of our intentional near-peer program design forces the Global Smarts mentors into the shoes of the students who they serve. One of the most obvious examples of this strategy comes in the form of our Mock-Model UN General Assembly meeting, where mentors must accurately represent an assigned country and debate and discuss this year's topic in a simulated United Nations General Assembly. Mentors are asked to write a position paper and a policy resolution stating their assigned country's relationship to the issue and argue for a preferred policy position based on the cultural and political realities of their country - exactly what's expected out of the students during the Jr. Model UN Final Conference.

Many of our mentors, novice model UN participants themselves, find this activity to be challenging, but incredibly informative of the experiences that their students face during the Jr. Model UN final conference. Mentors were able to see, from the students' perspective, the challenges of communicating complicated policy positions and cultural and political nuance over the Zoom virtual platform.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

"...getting to know the function and process of the United Nations through team exercises and presentations, was interesting and helped to broaden my understanding of challenges faced by people in other countries. My family discusses politics and global affairs every day, and this program strengthened my ability to participate."



—Eva P., 7th grade, Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School

"I enjoyed the Global Smarts Mentoring Program a lot. My favorite part of the program was learning so much about [my assigned] country that I never knew about before ... My mentors helped me through the program by being extremely helpful when I did not understand something."

—Alyssa O., 7th Grade, Shawmont Middle School

"During my time in the Global Smarts program I enjoyed learning about the job of a diplomat. I enjoyed working with the mentors and learning how to solve the problems in the world. Most of all I enjoyed the Final Conference. I was lucky enough to have one of my clauses chosen. I [learned from others] and got insight on my clause and learned how to make it stronger."

—Jalisa H., 7th grade, Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School

"Over the last few months in the Global Smarts mentoring Program I had a lot of fun. I was able to expand my public speaking and debating skills. My two mentors did an amazing job of helping through this program, despite the new and tough virtual environment. I liked being able to debate with my classmates in the days leading up to the final conference. This is my second time being in Model UN. Last year my year was cut short due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so I enjoyed having the chance to do it again."

—Tessa K., 7th grade, Shawmont Middle School

"In the beginning [of the program] I was scared because I have social anxiety and [I don't like public speaking]. After the program, [I still have anxiety] but I can speak clearly and I'm more comfortable than before. I also have more knowledge of [public health issues] in different countries."

—Nahla C.-C., 7th grade, Hope Partnership for Education

MENTOR TESTIMONIALS

"The Global Smarts Mentoring Program provides a way to bridge the gap between under-resourced students and their own potential. Throughout the program, I witnessed my mentees develop diplomatic problem-solving skills, the ability to advocate for themselves and their assigned countries, and their own capacities as agents of change."

—Kelsey W., St. Joseph's University

"The Global Smarts program is a tremendous opportunity for both the students and mentors to increase their confidence, learn about the United Nations, and connect with new people. I have seen the program's impact on the students' public speaking, research ability, writing skills, problem solving, and most importantly, their openness to new ideas."

—James F., Temple University



"This program allowed me to work with middle-school students and learn alongside them about important global issues. Throughout the semester, my students found the confidence to discuss the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals in a thoughtful way, creating engaging discussions and solutions to the social issues proposed."

—Mia A., Saint Joseph's University

"The Global Smarts Program is an engaging way to educate and excite the future leaders of the city of Philadelphia in their pursuit of global affairs. The program is as equally impactful to both the student and the mentor as their relationship grows as they work together to solve global issues and create a better world for the future."

—Dan O., St. Joseph's University

"Global Smarts showed me the world by bringing me closer to home. Through teaching Middle Schoolers in Philly about the UN they taught me to see the entire world through a different lens."

—Megan P. Saint Joseph's University

FACULTY ADVISER TESTIMONIALS

"Now more than ever, youth might feel disconnected or in their own 'bubble'. The Global Smarts Mentoring program plants a seed so that middle school students can start important conversations about what's going on around the world; hopefully this leads them to examine who they are now, what they believe in, & how they can be agents of change for future generations!"

—Ms. Nunez, Faculty Adviser, Juniata Park Academy

"Participating in Model UN makes a huge difference in my students' educational experience. Most of all, it gives them experiences and opportunities they all deserve."

—Ms. Banaszak, Faculty Adviser, Shawmont Middle School

"The World Affairs Global Smarts Mentoring Program provides students with an excellent guided introduction to Global Citizenry and International diplomacy. I believe these to be invaluable in our current world order."

—Mr. Ramos, Faculty Adviser, Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School

"Hope Partnership for Education students wanted to do more for the people around the world. The World Affairs Council changed their world view and created a desire for activism where they recognized they could be 'young men and women for others' and be the instruments to make the world a better place."

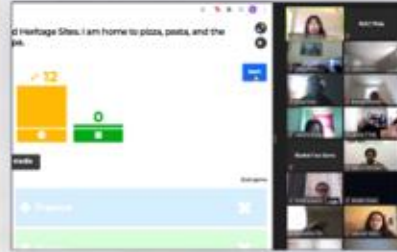
—Ms. Keeler, Faculty Adviser, Hope Partnership for Education



PHOTOS & VIDEOS



New Foundations – Student Award



New Foundations – Virtual Activity



Juniata Park Academy – Student Award



Juniata Park Academy – Virtual Session



Hope Partnership – Student Award



New Foundations – Virtual Session



St. Mary's Interparochial School – Virtual Session



Gesu School – Virtual Session



Mentor Mock Final Conference (Video)



Shawmont School – Student Award



Cook Wissahickon – Virtual Session



AMY Northwest – Virtual Session



SPONSOR RECOGNITION

Connelly Foundation
Hamilton Family Charitable Trust
Leo Niessen, Jr. Charitable Trust
Patricia Kind Family Foundation
Penn Museum
St. Joseph's University
Temple University

Thank you for the support that makes our impact with Philadelphia students possible!