

MMUN and the Elementary Student

The Montessori Model United Nations in many ways is structured to meet the following needs for the elementary student.

1. Elementary students need a curriculum that educates the “whole child.”

Taking part in the MMUN engages elementary students in many different ways. The intellectual element, which is so crucial for this age, is present as the students research a country, write an issue paper, and prepare to debate other students on serious global issues. The social need for this age is also fulfilled by the interaction of the students from different countries, schools, and cultures. During the debate stage of the MMUN, the students’ physical needs are met, as they are encouraged to meet in small groups and move around the meeting rooms as they try to align their interests with other countries.

2. Elementary students need exposure to real-world problem solving.

The MMUN allows elementary students to explore the real problems of the world and encourages them to discuss and negotiate possible solutions for issues that people face around the world such as contaminated water, the plight of the child soldier, and human-rights violations.

3. Elementary students need a curriculum that incorporates the three-period lesson.

The objectives of the MMUN—research, writing, debate, negotiation, and presentation—are specifically constructed to give the students short classroom demonstrations or lessons before allowing them the freedom to research and discuss the information they have learned with their peers and then using this information in a presentational format before student delegates of other countries.

4. Elementary students need to be responsible for their own learning.

Throughout the preparation and even during the conference, the students are responsible for the project. They are the ones who complete the research and decide the best resolution for the issue, and while meeting, they conduct the caucuses, negotiate with other student delegates, and write the resolution for each issue without their teachers’ interference.

5. Elementary students need continued practice in respect and civility.

The MMUN requires students to conduct themselves in a respectful manner towards the other delegates. Students quickly learn through role-playing that more success is achieved through civility in caucuses when important issues are at stake rather than discord.

6. Elementary students need discussion of important topics to formulate thoughts and develop critical-thinking skills.

Elementary classrooms are where the bulk of critical-thinking skills are developed. The exchange of ideas, the discussion of issues from all different aspects, and the resolution of problems, all which the MMUN requires, help elementary-age students think carefully about all the issues that surround them.

7. Elementary students need the continued use of narratives to keep them engaged in their education.

The Great Lessons are still very evident in the upper elementary classrooms. Students enjoy listening to narratives as new lessons are introduced. While studying the histories of their represented countries, students learn many narratives about different countries and are able to remember and share these and even use historical narratives in their issue papers to support their resolutions.

8. Elementary students need to be involved with justice from an individual aspect.

Elementary-age students seek justice from an individual standpoint. They instantly view situations as fair or unfair, not necessarily from a social perspective but from an individual one. The MMUN allows students to role-play a citizen from a different culture, which gives them a one-on-one perspective and understanding of any injustices suffered by the citizens of that country. This role-playing helps them see how other people endure injustices and what they do to end them.

9. Elementary students need to be challenged by multi-age groupings.

As in their classrooms, elementary students enjoy and are challenged by multiple ages. The MMUN continues this tradition by having elementary students of different ages working side by side, some with past experience from which the “rookie” students can caucus and learn.