

Lynn Knox

November 29th, 2023



- Bishop Verot Catholic High School, almost 25 years
- International Student Coordinator and English Teacher
- LYNN KNOX SWFLMUN COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD – Given to the Faculty Coach who best exemplifies the highest standards of excellence and empowerment in support of their Model UN Teams

<https://www.news-press.com/story/news/local/2023/02/28/jeopardy-claire-sattler-thanks-fort-myers-teacher-for-monday-win/69924520007/>

Can you provide a brief overview of your background and experience in international affairs?

I graduated from Stetson University in 1979 with a double major in English and secondary education. Following graduation, I moved to southwest Florida. During high school, I had already set my sights on becoming a high school teacher. My journey in education began with open-ended contracts in local public high schools. A turning point came when Aida Baker, the first female black principal at Cape Coral High School, hired me and became my mentor. Mrs. Baker once shared a piece of wisdom that has stayed with me: "Look beyond the cover of a person."

When I had my first son, I made the decision to stay at home and temporarily halted my teaching career. This decision deeply affected Mrs. Baker, as she was saddened by the prospect of us not working together anymore. After a few years, I felt the calling to return to teaching and took up a position replacing a teacher at my son's high school. From that point on, as they say, "the rest is history."

During my last two years of teaching, I took on the additional responsibilities of managing the international program and moderating Model UN. Interestingly, I initially had no knowledge of Model UN, but my involvement grew from being a novice to becoming a moderator.

How did model UN start in Bishop Verot Catholic High School?

At the beginning, Model UN was not perceived as a serious venture, and the kids did not fully grasp its goals or purpose. When the students approached me, asking if I would be their moderator, I was caught off guard. Having no prior experience with Model UN during my own high school years, despite being involved in activities like the debate club, I was unsure how to navigate this new role.

The kids reassured me, saying, "Don't worry, we will take over; you just have to be the adult in the room." Trusting their enthusiasm, I agreed. After three months of this arrangement, we attended SWFLMUN, and it dawned on me just how challenging and demanding the preparation for Model UN could be. Recognizing the need for structure and a solid foundation, we started building a program together, learning from the experience and strengthening our approach.

How did your academic background prepare you for a career in international affairs?

I grew up in a German neighborhood in New Jersey, and later in Connecticut, where I was exposed to a diverse mix of people from various parts of the world thanks to the trains and subways. The environment I grew up in did not see race as a problem, but it was not until I moved to Ft. Lauderdale that I had an eye-opening experience. There, I found myself surrounded by a 50% black population, exposing me to diverse cultures and lifestyles.

My understanding of the world expanded on a smaller scale, influenced by my friends, the places I lived, and the parts of the world I had the opportunity to travel to. As a teacher focused on literature and grammar, I made it a point to encourage my students to read about real-world

issues rather than sticking solely to science fiction. I aimed to instill in them a sense of being "Globally responsible."

How are you currently involved in international affairs? Please, describe your role and responsibilities in your current position. Involved now and role.

After my first retirement, I continued to stay involved with Model UN, although running the club became a challenge without being there day-to-day to reach out to students and recruit new members. I firmly believe that "anybody can do anything with the right tools."

Upon my second retirement, I made the difficult decision to step away from running the club. Over time, the school faced challenges in finding a new moderator. It was disheartening for me to witness the program we had built over nine years, with a strong foundation, not being continued with the same opportunities for the new generation of students.

Fortunately, a new moderator has taken over, and I have been contributing by providing voluntary consulting to other schools. It is my way of ensuring that the legacy and impact of Model UN continue beyond my direct involvement.

What advice do you have for individuals looking to pursue a career in international affairs?

There is a transformative element that takes root within you, and it is crucial to "open yourself up to the world." I strongly believe in seeking as much exposure as possible to the international arena. Exposure serves as the most effective means to keep kids engaged in understanding and

contributing to what is happening globally. I often advise them to "keep your heads up and don't look down."

Remarkably, I currently have 4-5 students who have ventured abroad and are actively working in international affairs. Additionally, one former student has risen to the rank of captain in the Air Force. Witnessing their journeys and seeing them pivot after their experiences in Model UN is truly amazing. It reinforces the power of providing students with a global perspective and the impact it can have on their future paths.

How do you recommend is an effective way to bring more kids into the program?

In my experience, the most effective approach is mentoring. Pairing successful students with newcomers allows for guidance and support, helping them present their ideas confidently. Emphasizing teamwork, where two students represent one country, fosters a collaborative environment that aids in the growth and confidence of new participants.

Building confidence in these new students is crucial. I have implemented strategies such as encouraging my freshman honor students to give Model UN a try, ensuring they at least experience it. Additionally, activities like club fairs and participation in the debate club serve as avenues for attracting and tracking students to the program. It is all about creating an environment where students feel empowered and confident in their abilities.

Are there any lessons you have learned that you wish you knew when starting your career?

I have to admit, I've been known to work incredibly hard, sometimes putting in too many hours. My perfectionist tendencies made things a bit too serious, and I found myself being quite demanding, especially with my own children. Interestingly, the best compliment I received was being described as "Demanding but fair, you don't play favorites."

In my teaching approach, I made a conscious effort to expose students to a wealth of content, perhaps more than they would typically see. I wanted to ensure they were truly learning and understanding the material. To foster a deeper understanding, all tests were essay-based, requiring students to showcase their unique voices rather than relying on multiple-choice options.

There was a point after a year of not receiving any awards at SWFLMUN when I reflected on my approach. I acknowledged that I had been very hard on the kids, pushing them to realize the importance of putting in more effort and striving for excellence. However, I also recognized the need to balance this intensity and sometimes regretted being too hard on them. It is a delicate balance between pushing for growth and ensuring a supportive learning environment.

“LYNN KNOX SWFLMUN COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD” tell us more about it?

Receiving honors was certainly appreciated, and I was genuinely thankful for the recognition. However, I would often joke about giving the award back. Teaching, for me, was never about money or seeking recognition. It has always been about the students—seeing them learn, achieve, and grow.

I firmly believe that not everything in education is about winning. The true victories lie in the progress and development of the students. The joy of witnessing their understanding deepen and their skills sharpen is the most fulfilling aspect of the teaching journey.