

# Middle School Humanities

## Description:

**East Africa Conference** - Students served as ambassadors from the East African nations of Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. At the conference Ambassadors engaged in committee work aimed at designing solutions to humanitarian problems faced by the nations of East Africa. Solutions were to include: an understanding of related work already being done; identifying potential partnerships between nations and with NGOs; and enumerating human, technological and financial resources necessary to carry out each program.

Committees worked collaboratively in advance of the conference, using research already performed as well as new research related to their committee's subject matter. This included narrowing the focus of a particular problem to target, so that achievable and specific solutions could be identified. Committees were tasked with identifying organizations that are already targeting their issues in East Africa or elsewhere in the world.

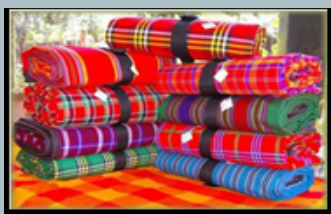
## Driving Questions:

What opportunities exist for individuals to effect practical and realistic change in our complex world? In what ways can individuals, organizations, and nations with limited resources and competing priorities partner to improve lives?



## Deliverables:

Students are working on PSAs about the complex and elemental challenges around the lack of access to clean water in many areas of East Africa. PSAs will be across several formats including written articles, live presentations and videos.



At the East Africa Conference each Ambassador brought a virtual gift for the other conference participants that represents their nation's culture and/or economy.

## Learning Goals:

### Research skills, collaboration and problem-solving:

Committees worked collaboratively in advance of the conference, using research already performed as well as new research related to their committee's subject matter. Committees also sought opportunities to collaborate and scheduled inter-committee work sessions.

**Persuasive and expository speaking, research, discerning elements of competing priorities:** During pre-conference negotiations each Ambassador proposed and advocated for three topics to be undertaken as committee work at the conference. After Ambassadors presented their arguments, a vote was held to determine which three would be selected. There were many compelling suggestions such as general health, AIDS, infectious diseases, poverty, terrorism, human trafficking, education and the plight of displaced persons and refugees. What do we tackle first? How does one choose just three? Students faced the reality of limited human resources and reflected in writing on the experience of making those difficult choices.

**Report writing:** Committees presented their proposed programs and partnerships in writing and orally at the conference, and the full conference then voted to accept or reject each proposal.

**Geography, culture and literature:** Prior to the conference each student researched their nation's geography, economy, culture and government. Non-fiction literary tie-ins included "*A Long Walk to Water*," by Linda Sue Park, and the film "*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*," based upon the book about William Kamkwamba. Both focus on the complexities and essential necessity for access to clean water.

