

Week 4 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

This week, facilitators reported that groups are seeing a healthy level of conflict as students connect the political to the personal, and explore their differences constructively. The majority of facilitators have also reported good or excellent dynamics in their sessions, and that students are now more open to discussing controversial / emotionally charged topics, which is great to see. However, a few groups had to cope with recurrent absences of their group-mates that made their group dynamics average.

The majority of groups did the Life Stories activity this week, in which they discussed the main influences / moments that have shaped their perspective in general, and their interactions with people from other cultures, in specific. For these groups, this activity helped students get to know each other better, and allowed them to explore the lens with which each student views the world. Conversations flowed smoothly and students went to explore the main issues that came out of the stories shared, and as a result- students explored themes such as the origins and causes of commonly-held stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings, how the environment is being impacted by emerging global factors such as Global Warming, and how to encounter differences/similarities in various cultures. At this point, students seem to fully understand that this not only an excellent opportunity to learn about different cultures and share commonalities, but also the perfect environment for them to tackle sensitive topics and understand the other side's perspective on them. Groups who opted to do the Dialogue Revisited: Asking Good Questions also initiated many interesting and free flowing discussions about critical issues such as generalizations and topics related to cultural conflicts and the reasons why such conflicts occur. This activity helped them build their empathy skills, as evidenced by them recognizing the similarities between their challenges and that of their partners, as well as their cross-cultural communication skills as they noted the utility of focusing on listening and understood its importance in dialogue.

Attendance & Technology Update

Attendance levels have remained largely the same, and all but one group had the critical mass necessary for students to be able to engage in constructive dialogue and interesting discussions. In the meantime, if your students are on break next week, please encourage them to login remotely for their sessions, and contact our tech team if they anticipate any technical difficulties. Their attendance is crucial for their groups' dynamics and learning process, and we would be grateful if you could **please remind your students that their attendance and participation remain crucial to the group's dynamic and to making the most out of their Soliya experience**. Also, for some universities who have been facing major technical issues, we really appreciate your support in urging your technical coordinators to respond to our tech team and update the necessary technical elements in order to help resolve the issue. Thank you!

This Week

This week, students will discuss one or two topics that their groups selected and identified as important global challenges and they'll have the opportunity to dig into them in greater depth, compare and contrast the different ways they perceive these issues, and the ways in which their personal perspectives / bias enrich and drive the dialogue. Also, students will engage in conversations, where they start asking one another questions and listening carefully to responses to more deeply explore differences and to re-examine where their positions come from. We hope students will continue to reflect on their own perspectives to gain greater awareness of the assumptions and values underlying their views, discuss the best ways to understand and engage with perspectives different from their own, and think critically about how they address differences and conflict.