

Connect Express: Week One Report

Main Activities and Group Dynamics:

This week, participants attended their first sessions of Connect Express. Before the first sessions begin, students were encouraged to introduce themselves on their group streams and share their perception of dialogue. To start the session, all groups opened the sessions with an icebreaker that allowed students to introduce themselves and their parts of the world. Then, facilitators took time to share information about the Program and the role of participants in the dialogue process.

During the sessions, students delved into the Identity Activity in which they reflected on the most important elements of their own identity and how it impacts the way they approach certain life experiences and engage with difference. After the activity, most participants started conversations about topics of their choice. Some groups discussed stereotypes and cultural misunderstanding, while others shared thoughts about media and gender issues.

Towards the end of the session, participants picked the discussion topics for the upcoming session and received information about key program components, including the assignment they will submit by the end of the program.

Most facilitators rated their group's dynamics as good or excellent. Some of them reported how their groups had a slow start, then students felt more comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas towards the end of the session. Throughout the Program, facilitators will support participants in developing a better understanding of dialogue process which will enable them to take a more active role in the group discussions.

Attendance and Technology:

This week, 75% of participants attended their sessions. Although the majority of students attended the first week successfully, we still count on your support to remind them to attend the remaining sessions. On the technical front, no major issues were reported and our team was able to support students who needed help connecting to their online sessions. To make sure participants join their dialogue sessions on time, please remind your students to log into their accounts on the Exchange Portal at their group meeting time and click on their Group Meeting Room under 'Meeting Rooms' to access their Zoom Room. If they have any questions or need additional support, please ask them to reach out to student-tech@soliya.net for technical support, and to students@soliya.net for all other issues.

Next week:

Now that participants are introduced to the dialogue process and the key elements of the program, they will dive into the topics they picked this week and practice listening and asking good questions in week two. The aim of the conversations is to enable groups to deeply explore issues that affect them and discover each other's views on the selected topics.