

Connect Global US-MENA: Week Four Report

Main Activities and Group Dynamics:

Like each session, participants opened the discussions with warm up activities and icebreakers. Then, they engaged in discussions about the second set of required readings on Intercultural Communication. Most facilitators encouraged their groups to discuss the writers' arguments on a deeper level and explore cultural differences from different angles.

In many groups, facilitators involved participants in conversations about stereotypes, cultural misunderstanding and how media is promoting social and global challenges in different parts of the world.

After the discussions, many groups then made time to work on their final projects. Students had the opportunity to discuss the first set of interviews they've conducted. Then, they broke out into smaller groups and worked in pairs to come up with the second interview questions they will use for their second set of interviews.

The majority of facilitators rated the groups as "Good" or "Excellent". Halfway through the program, participants were comfortable sharing their opinions, asking each other questions and taking ownership over the discussion. Many facilitators reported how their group participants were actively listening to each other's opinions.

Attendance & Technology:

Although the majority of participants were able to attend their sessions this week, we still count your support to remind your students to attend the remaining sessions. Full attendance and active participation are crucial to the dynamics of the program and its positive impact on participants.

To address the issues we had unexpectedly encountered in the past couple weeks, we rolled out an updated version of our platform in week four. This led to small breaks in connectivity that typically lasted 2-5 minutes early in the week. However, in the second half of the week, things stabilized and the remaining sessions ran smoothly. We're pleased to report that the majority of students were able to attend their sessions successfully.

To avoid any technical issues, we highly encourage students to login to their sessions a few minutes early and reach out to our technical team if they face any issues.

Next Week:

In week five, participants will focus on their personal stories through the Life Stories activity. During the activity, they will discuss the 3 key influences or moments that have shaped their perspective, and engage each other on a more personal level. Students will also continue free-flowing discussions about global and social challenges.

Outside of the sessions, students will conduct the final set of 90-second video interviews with the two community members they selected. They will then upload their interviews to the virtual exchange platform before their next session.