

Connect Global US-MENA Weekly Report 2

Main Activities and Group Dynamics:

This week, participants completed their second sessions. After the ice breakers, they engaged around the identity activity. This activity enabled students to reflect on the most important elements of their own identity and think about the lens through which they view the world, how it impacts the way they approach certain life experiences, and how they engage with difference. Then, groups explored social and global issues and students were able to discuss which issues they thought were the most important to them. Some groups shared their thoughts on education in their respective countries while others lead free-flowing conversations about immigration, integration and stereotypes. Many facilitators reported how participants from different cultural backgrounds shared similar views on the discussed topics which helped them build stronger bonds and develop curiosity about how some issues would be approached in different parts of the world.

After the conversation, groups started working on their final projects. Based on the discussions, participants agreed on the topic they will discuss during their interviews and developed the first question they will ask the community members they will interview by the third week of the program.

This week, most facilitators reported that the session dynamics were good or excellent. Though some students still need more time to feel comfortable and share their opinions more openly, facilitators shared several instances where participants avoided shallow conversations and encouraged their peers to ask any questions that would enable them to unfold their cultural differences in a more constructive way.

Attendance and Technology:

Approximately 25% of students were either absent or did not attend their full sessions this week. While all groups had the core number of students necessary for effective dialogue, **we would love your help in encouraging all your students to attend their sessions fully.** Your students' attendance is important for their learning experience and those of their peers, and we really appreciate your support on this!

On the technical front, we're happy to share that the platform has been performing normally this week, and there were no systemic issues. Some students experienced difficulties with their connections or with their webcam / mic set up, and most issues were resolved in-session.

If any of your students are having any trouble attending their sessions, please ask them to contact us (students@soliya.net) for help on non-technical issues, and student-tech@soliya.net for any technical support.

Next Week

During the third week of the program, participants will dive into a group selected topic. Students will practice asking good questions and will use them to engage around each other's similarities and differences on a deeper level. Outside of the group sessions, students should conduct their first set of interviews. With the help of the community members they selected this week, participants will record ninety-second videos that will be uploaded on the Exchange Portal by Thursday, October 29th.