

Week 2 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

This week, groups continued to deepen the process of getting to know each other, and most groups continue to report good or excellent dynamics, though a handful have reported average dynamics due to attendance issues in the group. To continue the process of building students' comfort and familiarity with each other, most groups started with an Introductory Activity, such as WHILE WAITING, that enabled them to kick off their sessions with a casual, personal conversation. Then, the majority of groups moved to the activity of Asking Good Questions, which allowed students to learn about self-awareness and critical thinking as it assisted them on how to get to the roots and experiences that inform their own and others opinions and world views.

Groups then used these activities to segue into the discussion on global and social challenges, where they discussed the topics that they felt strongly about, and that were related to last week's assigned readings. Some of the topics students identified as important included gender roles and inequality, unemployment and immigration, the refugee crisis, Media and its impact on forming the public opinion, the environment and global warming, national conflict and cultural stereotypes. In many groups, students did not only go into free-flowing discussions on these topics, but also demonstrated cross-cultural communication and collaboration skills as they worked together to build their groups' agendas for the semester. As students are generally not comfortable engaging each other actively in dialogue in the first couple weeks of the Program, this was great to see in the second week!

Attendance & Technology Update

This week, there was an increase in the number of absences by almost 5%. Given how important student attendance is to the quality of dialogue in sessions, we do not want the rate of absences to increase and would love your help in managing this issue. We have sent individual emails to our partners who had significant attendance problems in order to help them resolve their issues by the end of this week. If any of your students were absent this week, we'd like to ask you to encourage them to ensure they are attending all their remaining sessions because that their absence has a direct effect on their experience and their groupmates' experiences.

We are happy to report that our students experienced far fewer technical issues during their sessions this week than last week, and that our tech team was able to resolve the majority of microphone and connection issues that occurred in-session. Our tech team is following up with specific students and university technical coordinators to resolve any outstanding issues.

Next Week

Next week, group are likely to discuss intercultural communication, based on the assigned readings, and students will dig into both the principles and best practices of intercultural communication. Students will consider a range of issues, from the challenges of intercultural communication, to analyzing and reflecting on the Bennett Scale, to better understand how they can improve and deepen the dialogue with their groupmates. From there, we expect students will go on to discuss one or more topics they've identified as critical, and facilitators will continue to promote greater student leadership in the discussions and of the dialogue process.

As students become more comfortable with one another, facilitators are also focusing on encouraging students to take greater ownership of the dialogue process, and pushing them towards thinking more critically about the topics they discuss.