

Week 5 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

With stronger attendance levels and active participation from students, most groups continue to enjoy positive dynamics and engaging conversations. Facilitators report that students are building their ability to challenge each other while remaining respectful and open; they are taking greater leadership over the dialogue process, and there is more equal participation from the group members than before.

The majority of groups discussed the Life Stories activity last week. 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 relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies. Conversations flowed smoothly and went on tangents 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, how different environments and personalities shape students' lens with which they view the world and the experiences that have been influential in students' lives. Many groups also integrated conversations around the process of dialogue that involved conflict resolution tools to help students deepen their discussions, through activities such as the 'Iceberg' that illustrates the need to dig beyond the surface views to question assumptions and how views are formed, and the 'Trigger Words' activity, that allows students to explore terms / phrases that are particularly triggering or difficult for them, and why.

Attendance & Technology Update

Attendance levels have remained largely the same, with approximately 80% of students present in their sessions. Thank you for your support in ensuring better student attendance! We hope to see attendance levels improve through the remaining weeks of the Program and as such, would love your help in encouraging all of your students to log into sessions for the full 2-hour session for weeks 6 (this week), 7 and 8. We are also happy to report that technical issues remained very low, and almost all technical issues that came up were resolved during the session.

While more groups are enjoying a fuller complement of students in discussion, a few groups continue to see 2-3 students absent from their sessions. As such, we would be very grateful if you could continue encouraging your students to make an extra effort to attend all three remaining sessions. Thank you so much for your continued support!

This Week

In week 6 of the Program, students are / will discuss their video projects with their group members. They will have the opportunity to dig into each other's videos, compare and contrast the different ways they have chosen to frame the issue, the narrative line they pursued both via audio and in their choice of footage, and the ways in which their personal perspectives / bias may have affected the final "news piece". This will lead to a conversation on the role of the media in the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies as well as other media-related topics such as control and influence of the media, media bias and objectivity, etc. Finally, students will engage in substantive discussion about the debate on freedom of expression vs. respect for religion, and the impact real-world events similar to the fictitious event (e.g. Danish cartoons, Innocence of Muslims, etc) have had on the tensions between these societies.