

Week 5 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

With almost the same attendance levels and 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.

This week, groups began their sessions with a range of different activities to help them explore their different cultures and identities. Some groups began with a virtual show and tell, while others did the Differences Treasure Hunt, during which students are paired off and tasked with asking each other questions about a topic of their interest until they can 'uncover' and explore differences. From there, most groups went on to do the Life Stories activity, in which students share the 3 most significant moments / influences that have shaped their perspective. This activity helped students get to know each other better, and allowed them to explore the lens with which each student views the world.

Conversations flowed smoothly and went on different 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, gender issues and the role of men and women in society, and the role of religion in their personal lives and in society. Groups also naturally moved to discussing other topics they consider important and covered a broad range of topics such as the Syrian crisis, the Turkish referendum, the role of media in shaping perceptions, and immigrants and refugees, and how they're perceived or treated in different countries. It is clear that students showed a lot of confidence and comfort while sharing their opinions and experiences, leading to richer and more meaningful dialogue.

Attendance & Technology Update

Attendance levels have remained largely the same, and all but one group had the critical mass necessary for students to be able to engage in constructive dialogue and interesting discussions. We really appreciate your support in ensuring student attendance in their sessions, and thank you for your continued efforts. We also 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 the 2 remaining weeks 6 and 7. We are also happy to report that technical issues remained pretty low, and almost all technical issues that came up were resolved during the session.

Next Week

Next week, students will discuss one or two topics that their groups selected as important at the beginning of the semester. As this has been the most effective way to motivate students to engage actively in dialogue, we hope that these discussions will encourage thought-provoking conversations about the issues that students feel are key Global Challenges. They will also have the chance to engage in topics that they are working on closely for their final project with their partners.