

## **Partnering with New Communities Best Practices**

**Connecticut Office of the Arts Creative Aging Foundations Training: Teaching Artists  
September 12-14, 2022**

### **Sarah's group:**

- Volunteer, if possible, to support in the community and ease the transition
- Visit a community first to see what it's like; observe day to day operations
- Establish rapport with your contact at the community
- Cultivate alliances with staff (director, activities and custodial staff)
- Express interest, ask questions
- Be willing to meet people where they are
- Gather information about the space, staff, and organizational culture
- Make sure you know what they're looking for and what you're going in for
- Be willing to "re-sculpt" teaching plans to adjust to environment

### **Rhynna's group:**

- Ask staff to be present in class for additional support
- Being clear about communication. Answer emails quickly. You can troubleshoot issues before the class starts
- Tour the center before the class begins.
- Offer self-care support for students. Address the reality of COVID-19. Using affirmations in classes is affirming for students
- Building strong relationships with staff - custodial, assistants and director
- Be clear about what facilities are available before class instruction begins.
- Get students to engage and talk in the beginning. Fun atmosphere. Share your own background and artistic experience. Create a safe and inviting environment.
- Social Engagement - Encourage students to share in an informal setting. The instructor being vulnerable allows students to connect in a more organic way, and shows respect

### **Jade's group:**

- When entering new communities, be friendly and sensitive to others' needs
- Observe their interests, skill levels, and the surroundings
- Offer a demonstration class as an introduction
- Starting with some social activities may help people to be more comfortable with one another

- A lot of organizations (esp. senior centers) are understaffed. Try to understand their situation; offer gentle reminders if they are behind on the process
- Speak to the executive director or program manager and ask them to point to the people who can assist. Present them with details of the class
- It is helpful to include service coordinators to help with the process
- Have a staff member or even the coordinator participate in the class. Have them experience the class. This will help them understand what can be improved or what else is needed

**Daniela's group:**

- Take the time to get to know your students and their reasons for participating in your class
- Get help when you need it! If there is a language barrier, find a translator if resources allow
- Create a safe environment where students can feel comfortable to express themselves. There is no right way or wrong way to do something!
- If teaching a class where music is used, encourage students to bring in their own music
- Send handwritten thank you notes to key contacts at the organization
- Build positive relationships with the staff of the organization you're working with - especially the custodial workers who may be able to help you down the line