

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