

Working with New Communities Best Practices

NJ Teaching Artist Training

Lynda/Julie's group:

- First impressions may not be accurate; challenge your own assumptions
- Establish Trust
- Go in with confidence - remember the goals of why you're there. Always come back to that
- Do not assume anyone's capabilities initially or that their present situation is limited
- Find the social butterfly of the group - the person who will spread the word
- Might have to educate folks on what the program is really about and expectations - may need to push people a little
 - Also educate staff and volunteers involved with the program
- Financial support - like transportation - may be needed to involve new people

Vinny's group:

- Bring food or snacks as incentive to get people to come and talk to you
- Be a good example to open up and share as sometimes people don't want to be the first to share
- Find a community leader who can help you to get buy-in from others in the community
- Establish a good relationship with those who work in that space and who know the folks in the space really well
- Be clear about the expectations/timeline of the project you are pitching

Ann's group:

- Make introductions of all team members in the beginning so everyone knows who is involved and who everyone is
- Establish trust by sharing concerns and interests upfront so everyone understands the space they are about to occupy and what the expectations are. This could happen in a discussion, or via a written document
- When entering and getting to know new communities, engage in common interests that aren't necessarily with an agenda attached but to socially connect, like attending community events and gatherings
- Learn from mistakes - especially in being more flexible and organic with how you move through the learning and the creative space you have created
- Be honest and open; listen
- Understand it is a process of trial and error, and a living breathing thing you are establishing

- Remember as an artist working often in isolation and alone, that you are entering spaces of collaboration and engagement and may need to adapt

Asma's group:

- Make eye contact. Connect and breathe!
- Make a practice of listening to what participants talk about so you can tailor your works to their interests
- Make linkages to historical eras and participants' cultural backgrounds while creating curriculum
- Demonstrate through arts activities, that the community's story is valued, important and should be preserved and shared