

Working with New Communities Best Practices

Vermont Teaching Artist Training

Vinny's group:

- Connect ahead of time and get feedback on what you're proposing to offer.
- Keep it light - use humor or levity to enter the community. Don't bore people with too many details right away.
- Develop trust with participants as well as the agencies.

Asma's group:

- Be resourceful and compile a comprehensive list of political leaders, organizations, teaching artists and venues that already serve the community you are becoming a part of.
- Pay attention and listen to everyone in the community you are entering, from the quietest to the loudest members.
- Co-create community agreements with partner organizations as well as participants in classes.
- Build relationships with office staff, caregivers and maintenance engineers at the site, and celebrate and welcome their knowledge and contributions.
- If you are co-facilitating, develop strategies to support each other's work.

Penelope's group:

- **Listen** with intent and be available to the staff. **Celebrate** and acknowledge the positive, not just challenges.
- Trust building with staff/teachers as well as students. **Consistency**. Low stakes safety. **Follow the flow**.
- **Control and confidence** in what you are doing creates trust.
- **Full presence** and no condescension.

Lynda's group:

- Research the organization ahead of time
- Connect with a person who will be your advocate in the community
- Clarify your needs and ask questions regarding the needs of the participants
- Be sensitive to the history, culture and needs of the community
- Connect with staff and those who will support your work and the participants
- Try to meet all those who will be of support to you prior to your arrival
- Plan with intention to meet the needs of the community

Julie's group:

- Let the participants lead the process
- Be adaptable - use different modes of communication and art-making (for example, maybe visual rather than written, etc.)
- Be well-prepared but also ready to change gears at moment's notice
- Spend time in the first class getting to know who they are so you can adjust plans
- Don't make any assumptions - about what participants may know or may not know
- Be prepared for anything!
- Have your persona be - "I am to join the group and learn together" - not "Here I am to teach you"
- Make sure as many people as possible in the community know you're there
- Introduce yourself to everyone - custodial staff, reception desk, nurses - make sure everyone knows who you are and what you're trying to do - they will be very helpful
- Get help introducing myself - have people in the community introduce you
- Talk gently to everyone in the community over-all to support what's happening in the class
- Ask for feedback from the community as a whole about the class