

Partnering with New Communities Best Practices

Wyoming Arts Council - Teaching Artists 2024

Sarah's Group:

- Familiarize yourself with community leaders:
 - Establish a connection with them.
 - Understand the community's hierarchy, particularly the influential "head hen" who knows everyone.
- Address biases:
 - Reflect on personal biases.
 - Evaluate and align personal agenda with the actual needs of the community.
- Be appreciative. Especially show gratitude towards generous and enthusiastic staff support.
- Understand the community you're entering:
 - Research and be well-informed about the community.
 - Manage expectations by considering the contrast between your expectations and reality.
- Connect with organizations as well as individuals:
 - i.e. deliver books for the public library, conduct outreach to organizations and individual homes.
 - Build trust with patrons over time.
 - Demonstrate consistency in engagement, genuine curiosity, and interest without being overly pushy.
- Engaging with residential care communities:
 - Learn to navigate mixed experiences; some can be welcoming, some are indifferent.
 - Display positivity and enjoyment
 - Maintain good clean-up practices and adhere to time constraints.
 - Exhibit adaptability with materials and stay flexible.
- When collaborating with Indigenous communities:
 - Show up in person consistently over time.
 - Build meaningful relationships within the community.
- Be aware of workplace norms and adapt accordingly:
 - Adapt one's own approach to align with the workplace environment.
- Embrace openness to learning from older adults.

Clark's Group:

- Benefits of Non-traditional/Older Students:
 - Diversity enhances learning environments.
 - Older adults often excel as leaders in small groups.
 - Older adults typically have well-defined goals and expectations.
 - Regular check-ins with older students can inform your approach.
- Address Imposter Syndrome:
 - Recognize that “imposter syndrome” is a natural part of the process, especially when starting out.
 - Develop confidence in being hired for your expertise.
- Assess in the beginning folks' personality types and communication styles:
 - Recognize introvert/extrovert dynamics.
 - Adapt accordingly.
- Approach communication within/adjacent to indigenous communities and artists as an ally, avoiding exploitation/appropriation.
- Community Agreements foster positive cultural environments:
 - Discuss and define community agreements collectively.
 - Ensure everyone's input and voice are heard.

Antonia's Group:

- To build rapport with new communities, pay attention to how people interact with each other:
 - Listen, establish eye contact, smile.
 - Research community ahead of time.
- Maintain professionalism while being human and authentic.
- Use chocolate as an icebreaker!
- Go outside, meet and connect with new people.
- Organize public events like crafts fairs to engage with the wider community. Distribute information about classes during these events.
- Pay attention to people's speech patterns, adjusting your speech to be clear and slow, especially when there are significant differences in communication styles.
- Establish who might be your primary contact, or liaison, within the community who can support your relationship-building efforts.
- Provide a diverse range of arts experiences to the community. Explore what truly resonates with them.

Rhynna's Group:

- Careful preparation and planning.
- Conveying enthusiasm and sharing it with students is impactful, as their energy levels are influenced by yours.
- Asset-based approach: Emphasize the benefits participants will gain from the class, such as opportunities for socialization and interaction with their peers.

Nathan's Group:

- Acknowledge when you are feeling nervous or out of place.
- Recognize the opportunities to learn from peers.
- Build connections with people you might not typically interact with, discovering shared interests.
- In a community college setting, folks who joined had a wide range of experience (both in the art form and in life), but everyone came with a unified goal - learning something they were interested in.
- Develop a relationship with an art center (applies to any local cultural organization):
 - Attend events and meet people.
 - Seek out opportunities to participate: Volunteer, join a committee, join the board.
- Facilitating a welcoming environment is key to relationship-building.
- Connecting with struggling Individuals: Build trust by providing positive experiences to uplift them from their situation.
- When introducing a new artform (i.e. Metalsmithing): Host an introductory event to the art form; this increases interest/registration.