

SWAH 1010/1020 Student Reflection

Civic and Community Engagement Reflection

When my group initially discussed what our community engagement project would look like we decided we wanted to make direct relationships with the local youth with a primary focus on immigrant students who spoke Swahili. Our first solution was to have an after-school program where we would coordinate with Charlottesville High School to organize dance classes. These classes would consist of a mix of trending American dances as well as cultural African dances. The goal of this program was to help immigrant students transition into American culture while also preserving their own culture and identity. The way that my group delegated tasks heavily relied on our own personal resources. Because I was able to bring a car to UVA, I opted to provide rides to the high school. In addition, because of my dance background, I would take charge of selecting and teaching American dances/ music. My peers would then divide tasks in terms of communication with Charlottesville High School, promotion via flyers and direct communication with students, and scheduling.

Because of my specific role, my first task was to coordinate when everyone in the group would be available to go to Charlottesville High School. I was able to do this via the program When2Meet where I had everyone send in their availability. Next, I got to work on deciding the American music and dance choice. I wanted to make a good mix of both individual moves as well as simple choreography. I wanted the music to be clean with no explicit language and for the dances to be age-appropriate while still being relevant to the modern dance scene. I selected artists such as Beyonce, Ariana Grande, and Lizzo with moves such as “the whoa”, “shoot”, the “milly rock”, and “tutting”.

As a group, our biggest problem first came with scheduling. Because we did not settle on our action plan until after our individual schedules were already established, it was difficult to find a time that we were all available. Instead, we chose to plan ahead for the spring semester where we were able to change our class and extracurricular schedule in advance to accommodate our plans. Of course, due to COVID-19, we were unable to finalize our plans with Charlottesville High School to come in and teach classes. However, if we have the ability to come back to our community engagement plan this following fall semester, I believe that most of our kinks involving scheduling will be able to be solved in more of a timely manner.

Although I was not able to see our original project through I was able to translate the IRC Refugee Traveling Documentation steps. The information provided me with insight into how expensive the process can be to bring a family into the United States. The Refugee Travel Document Fee may be up to \$220 per person and an additional \$175 per person for an assistance fee. I was glad to help preform an initial translation but the information itself upset me due to the strenuous process and how expensive it is. I believe the government should create a better system where the immigration process provides more assistance for a lower cost. This could be done by reallocating the federal budget away from unnecessary spending such as the military and more towards assistance programs for refugees.