Syrian Refugee Simulation

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In this student-created and student-run simulation, community participants took on the roles of Syrian citizens forced to seek refuge in another country. Students began this project by studying all facets of the Syrian Refugee Crisis, initially planning to create either a play or an exhibition about the refugee crisis. After deciding that neither product would have the impact that they wanted to achieve, a group of students proposed a simulation. We analyzed existing simulations, video games and non-fiction accounts of refugee journeys in order to identify common routes and develop "character sheets" for participants to use. As students designed and refined the simulation, we carried out weekly "playtest" in which staff members and other students went through the simulation and then evaluated their experience.

Teacher Reflection
I knew this project would be logistically complex when we started, but the extent of the challenge only became clear once we were in the midst of it. Students figured out the complexities of European immigration law, worked out the going rate for smugglers under a variety of circumstances and the likelihood of gaining refugee status in a particular country, and then developed characters by creating composites of real people's stories. The students' commitment to their roles was inspiring, especially considering that the simulation took place in our school's outdoor lunch area, with barriers indicated by overturned tables, student-made fake barbed wire, hand-painted signs, and caution tape.

Student Reflection
Almost everyone that passed through the simulation and went to the debrief room told me what a great simulation it was and how realistic it felt for them. They also told me that even though it felt real, they knew they were going home afterward. But other people don't know that—this is their everyday life, and this is a reality for a lot of people.
                                                                        —Verenice

To learn more about this project, visit Alec Patton's Digital Portfolio at alecpatton.weebly.com