



EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER

An Asynchronous Professional Development Opportunity

This step by step guide provides for a professional development opportunity that is easy and effective. While this simulation and guide can be used asynchronously, you can choose to turn this into a virtual, synchronous session or even request that SchoolSims facilitates this simulation for you, at no charge.

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Email Template to Send to Professional Development Staff

Use this email if you have downloaded this guide to send to someone else who is responsible for professional development.

Dear < > ,

I am excited to announce an opportunity that SchoolSims (www.schoolsims.com) has provided that will allow our current and aspiring leaders cohort an opportunity for asynchronous professional development. SchoolSims has been providing educational leadership simulations since 2013 to thousands of school leaders throughout the country. Simulations will allow us to provide PD at a time when it is not possible to gather as a cohort.

The information below was provided by SchoolSims as an overview and step-by-step guide to deploy the simulation:

In general, how do simulations work?

Participants are presented with challenging, authentic scenarios that require them to make decisions as the situation evolves. Each choice is designed to portray circumstances as they might occur in any school or district. Decisions are recorded in different forms, such as single-choice, multiple-choice, choose all that apply, or enter a text response. Feedback regarding the path chosen is provided at the end of the simulation.

The major theme of all simulations is that *Experience is the Best Teacher* and what makes them a powerful vehicle for learning and development. Simulations approximate experience in a unique way and enable participants to learn by doing in contextual situations. Participants grow from trying different choices, experiencing the consequences of their selections, and having to deal with both the good and bad outcomes. With simulations, the focus shifts away from teaching and is more about application of knowledge and the building of resilience – it is not about getting it right. Gaining experience in a realistic context so that judgment can be improved when issues arise in real life, is the goal of every simulation.

The simulation provides a platform to test different ways to approach an issue in a risk-free environment. By asking for text input to describe a thought process, participants are challenged to offer the rationale behind their decision. The responses to these questions are not meant to be turned in or graded. The prompts serve to promote a thoughtful post-simulation reflection and further the opportunity for learning outside of the sim.

Step by Step Deployment

Step 1. Play the simulation once to have an initial experience just like your cohort will have. Then play the sim again and reflect on how it relates to issues that are evident in your building or district; examples may be relevant policies, new initiatives, common norms, etc. Another point of emphasis may be to reflect on how different actions or reactions aligned with or against standards of practice. Preparing this important information upfront will enable robust conversation and peer-to-peer learning during post-simulation dialogue.

Step 2: Determine how you want to receive feedback from participants after they have viewed the sim. Do you want them to email you their Reflection Logs or do you want to create online message board for them to post comments?

Step 3. Email the simulation link to your cohort using the body of the email provided below with the Simulation Reflection Log attached.

Step 4. Collect feedback from the participants via email or establish a discussion board for posting comments. Review comments and analyze responses to identify areas of focus for future PD programming and to prepare for the group discussion.

Step 5. Host a Zoom/MSTeams/GoToMeeting session for the cohort to meet as a large group as well as break into small groups to discuss the professional norms in play in the simulation and their responses to the provided prompts. [Approximately 60 minutes – depending on who leads the discussion and the goals for the session]

Optional Email Template to Inform Superintendent:

Dear <superintendent >,

I am excited to inform you that I have opted to take advantage of a free trial partnership with SchoolSims (www.schoolsims.com) to bring our current and aspiring leaders cohort an opportunity for asynchronous professional development. SchoolSims has been providing educational leadership simulations since 2013 to thousands of school leaders throughout the country. Simulations will allow me to provide PD at a time when it is not possible to gather as a cohort.

The information below was provided by SchoolSims as an overview and step-by-step guide to deploy the simulation:

Participants are presented with challenging, authentic scenarios that require them to make decisions as the situation evolves. Each choice is designed to portray circumstances as they might occur in any school or district. Decisions are recorded in different forms, such as single-choice, multiple-choice, choose all that apply, or enter a text response. Feedback regarding the path chosen is provided at the end of the simulation.

The major theme of all simulations is that Experience is the Best Teacher and what makes them a powerful vehicle for learning and development. Simulations approximate experience in a unique way and enable participants to learn by doing in contextual situations. Participants grow from trying different choices, experiencing the consequences of their selections, and having to deal with both the good and bad outcomes. With simulations, the focus shifts away from teaching and is more about application of knowledge and the building of resilience – it is not about getting it right. Gaining experience in a realistic context so that judgment can be improved when issues arise in real life, is the goal of every simulation.

The simulation provides a platform to test different ways to approach an issue in a risk-free environment. By asking for text input to describe a thought process, participants are challenged to offer the rationale behind their decision. The responses to these questions are not meant to be turned in or graded. The prompts serve to promote a thoughtful post-simulation reflection and further the opportunity for learning outside of the sim.

Please let me know if you would like anymore information; otherwise, I will report back to you when we have completed the free trial.

Email Template: You to Current and/or Aspiring Leaders

Dear [Aspiring and Current School Leaders],

I am excited to announce a trial partnership with SchoolSims (www.schoolsims.com) to bring you, a member of our current and aspiring leaders cohort, an opportunity for asynchronous, online professional development. Since its founding in 2013, thousands of school leaders throughout the country have used SchoolSims simulations to add to their experience portfolio. Simulations manufacture experience by placing participants in authentic school-based situations where they must apply what they have learned, utilize judgment, and practice critical thinking when dealing with the challenges within the simulation. By having this experience, you will be better prepared to make the right decision when faced with similar real-life scenarios.

You will find a link to play the simulation entitled, Cultural Competency below. Playing the simulation and the time to answer the Reflection Sheet should take approximately 60-75 minutes. The first time through the simulation, you should choose the options that most closely reflect how you would respond to each scenario in real-life and complete the Reflection Log based on that first-time-through experience. Feel free to go back and play the simulation as many times as you would like and select different choices at various points to see how those decisions affect the outcome.

[Insert instructions here on how you want feedback – whether you have established an online Discussion Board or want Reflection Sheets returned via email]

We will be meeting as a group on <date and time> via <Zoom or GoToMeeting or MSTeams> to debrief on the simulation and discuss your observations and reflections.

Simulation Reflection Log

Name _____

Title: _____

Title of Simulation: Cultural Competency

1. To connect the theories and best practices within the simulation to real-life, "How does the information in this simulation apply to your current or future role?"
2. Identify and explain the unethical or unprofessional actions in play during this simulation?
3. Which of the following professional norms (integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement) were required to make good decisions in this simulation? Explain.
4. What is a leadership lesson you learned from this scenario that can assist you when you face this situation in real-life?
5. What leadership knowledge, skill or disposition did you feel you may have lacked when making the decisions along the way? What do you still need to learn to be equipped to make a good decision in a situation like this?