

## Simulation Activity

### Overview

Participants will be given simulations of various disabilities and will engage in a “lesson” in order to identify some of the challenges individuals with disabilities may encounter in classroom environments. To be more “obvious”, the lesson should be presented ineffectively with the instructor demonstrating little patience, moving quickly, relying heavily on written materials, “calling on” students, and lengthy verbal directions.

Each participant will be given a folder with the instructional materials needed for the lesson, simulation materials (e.g., goggles, wheelchair, altered reading materials) and/or a note-card with a description of how they must be simulated during the lesson.

### Lesson Format:

(Note) Participants should already be simulated.

1. Begin the lesson by stating that the students are going to read a short passage and will be expected to answer some questions when they are finished. ([Reading passage](#) or use your own.)
2. Call on students to read aloud. When students have difficulty with the task, become impatient and tell them to read silently and answer the questions when they are finished.
3. Allow them time to read and walk around telling students to hurry or to ask them why they are not further ahead yet.
4. Call students back together to “grade” written responses. Have students switch papers and call on individuals within the group to answer the questions.
5. When finished with lesson, allow students to take off their simulations and discuss the following:
  - a. What kinds of problems did you encounter?
  - b. What other areas of your life do you think would be impacted if you lived with this disability?
  - c. What kind of support do you think would have helped you during this lesson?
  - d. What could the teacher have done differently to accommodate the needs of most of the learners?

## Possible Simulations:

### [Various simulation ideas](#)

1. Print the written materials with “wing ding” font to simulate a student who is a non-reader.
2. Print the written materials in the participants’ non-native language to simulate the experiences of ESL students (note that this is not necessarily a disability, but represents a significant learning challenge).
3. Give the participant directions to do the following: “You have difficulty with decoding words. Every time you read a word containing three or more syllables, you must first read each syllable in isolation (sound it out), then read the first & second syllable together, the first, second, & third syllable together and so on until you say the word in its entirety twice. Continue doing this with each multi-syllabic word you encounter. (This exercise will simulate a student who has difficulty with decoding and most likely, comprehension).
4. Give the participants directions to do the following: “You have difficulty with decoding words and short-term memory problems that cause you to forget what you have read. Every time you read a word containing three or more syllables, you must read that word 5 times in a row, then go back to the beginning of the sentence and re-read it until you come to the next multi-syllabic word. Continue repeating the “new” multi-syllabic words and “starting over” until you complete each sentence.
5. Print the written materials in very small font to simulate a student with low-vision.
6. Have students wear vision goggles to simulate a student with low-vision or blindness.
7. Have students wear earplugs to simulate a student with a hearing impairment.
8. Have students wear mittens or gloves with fingers sewn together on their non-dominant hand and use that hand for turning pages and writing to simulate a student with motor difficulties.
9. Have students seated in a wheelchair and bind their arms to their sides at the elbow to simulate a student with physical impairments.

10. Give the participants directions to do the following: When speaking and/or writing, you may only use sentences that are composed of 3 words or less. (This exercise will simulate a student who has cognitive impairments).
11. Give the participants directions to do the following: You may speak only when spoken to; you may *not* initiate conversation. When you are asked for a verbal response (e.g., the teacher or a peer asks you a question or engages you in conversation, etc), you must count *slowly* to 10 before responding. (This exercise will simulate a student who has communicative disorders and/or a cognitive impairment).
12. Give the participants directions to do the following: When speaking and/or writing, you must stop and count slowly to five in between every other word. (This exercise will simulate a student who has motor, communicative, and/or writing difficulties).
13. Give the participants directions to do the following: When writing responses, you must write and trace each letter 5 times in a row. You will then erase and re-write every third word while continuing to trace each letter. (This exercise will simulate an individual with hand writing difficulty).
14. Give the participants directions to do the following: When speaking or writing, you may not use any words containing the letters "R" or "T". This excludes reading. (This exercise will simulate an individual with word retrieval and/or writing difficulty).
15. When handing out folders with instructional materials, give participants a folder full of additional papers, intersperse the pages they need for the lesson throughout the stack, and remove their pencil. (This exercise will simulate an individual with organizational difficulties).
16. Have participant wear headphones and listen to a tape that is playing loud ambient noises (e.g., coughing, pencil tapping, writing/erasing sounds, keys jingling, phone ringing, car revving, keyboard sounds) throughout the lesson. (This exercise will simulate an individual who has attentional difficulties due to distractibility).
17. Have participant wear headphones and listen to a tape that is playing comments (that are paranoid in nature) throughout the lesson. (This exercise will simulate an individual who has mental illness).
18. Give the participants directions to do the following: Frequently jerk your head back hard and fast. Try to do the head jerk in bursts -- like two or three rapidly. Wait a few seconds, and do another hard, fast head jerk, or

another burst. Do this throughout the lesson. If you have a physical condition that prevents you from jerking your head back hard, do the exercise the same way but instead of jerking your head back hard and fast, roll your eyes severely to one side. Do the eye roll "tic" in bursts, and do it frequently. (This exercise will simulate an individual with Tourette's Syndrome).

### **Variations of Instructional Activities:**

1. Have only  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the class simulated. Treat the students with "disabilities" differently than those who do not have disabilities (e.g., ignore them, use "baby talk", comment on how long they are taking, act impatient). Discuss the experience.
2. As you go through the lesson, pause briefly at different points during the lesson and ask students to discuss any problems they may have be encountering (e.g., "I can't read the material", "I can't write that fast"). Discuss possible accommodations that could be used and provide them (to allow students to perform the tasks with and without accommodations). Gradually phase in supports as the lesson continues. Discuss the experience and brainstorm ideas for other alternatives.