

# K-12 Education Leadership ***Best Practices Simulations***

*Simulation Facilitators Guide*

### What is a Simulation?

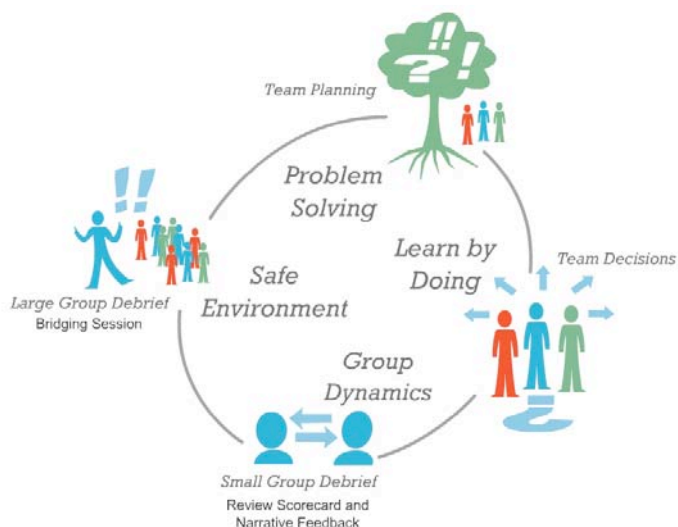
A Simulation is an interactive leadership situation. It focuses on enabling and enhancing application of knowledge and skills in the real-world environment. The Simulation experience introduces users to common real-world leadership and interpersonal situations—and allows them to work through how to handle them—prior to experiencing them on the job. Working with Education Leaders from different backgrounds and areas of expertise, ELS is developing a library of these Simulations. Each Simulation covers a different topic germane to K-12 Education Leadership and Interpersonal Relationships.

The ELS Leadership Best Practices Simulations are not designed to reflect any one specific school or district's environment. They are designed to present issues and obstacles participants generally face in education. At the conclusion of each Simulation, participants receive feedback in a variety of forms that will allow them to improve *critical thinking* about the issues presented in each Simulation.

### How it works

Unlike a 'manual' or case study, simulations provide users an opportunity to immerse themselves in an environment where they can explore learning objectives

The learning is achieved by allowing users to consider options, make mistakes in a safe environment and draw conclusions from the experience to develop and retain critical thinking. Understanding WHY is more powerful than simply being told HOW.



### Simulation Overview

Simulations can be completed by individuals or by small teams.

Each ELS Simulation consists of a core issue requiring resolution and is designed for a running time between 20 and 35 minutes. Participants are presented with an environment and situations that require them to make decisions by entering input into the Simulation. Each decision is designed to portray situations as they might occur in any school or district. Decisions may take several, different forms, such as single-choice, multiple-choice, choose all that apply and enter values. Feedback will be provided at the end of the Simulation for the path the participant chose.

The Simulation also provides a platform to test for knowledge and different ways to approach an issue by asking participants for text input that describes their thought processes. When the Simulation is delivered as a part of group based professional development, the recommended total debrief time after each Simulation is 30–45 minutes.

### Reports

In addition to informal feedback incorporated into the storyline of the Simulation, in some of the simulations, participants will receive written feedback on the path they chose in the simulation. The written feedback report describes the issues raised in the decisions and explains the effects of choices made.

Additionally, weighted scoring of the choices made may be reflected in Gauges. The Gauges help participants understand how their decisions affected specific tradeoffs in the simulation. The Gauges also provide input for debrief discussions to determine best practices for their schools and situations.

### School or District

In each of the Simulations, the participant will play the role of a leader and decision maker in the story. All of the participants will work for a fictitious school or district and that will be described in the opening scene. The participants will play the role of the leader (Principal or Superintendent) in each of the Simulations. Over time, ELS will introduce a Simulated District that will show up in different simulations to provide a grounding factor for the participants.

<b>School or District</b>	The setting will be described and will represent a realistic K-12 context for the scenario to play out in. It is not designed to model any specific school or district but have elements that can be recognizable to leaders.
<b>Participants</b>	The participants should be divided up into teams of 3-5 people. Each team will play the role of the decision maker in the Simulation. The team will collectively make the decisions for the key character (Ed Leader) in the simulation.
<b>Cast</b>	The cast members of the Simulation are individuals who interact with one another in the simulated environment based on the storylines developed.
<b>Objectives</b>	Simulation teams will be charged with successfully resolving the issues encountered in the simulation. As in the real world, often decisions will be trade-off decisions. The team will, collectively, decide what the best decision is for the students and/or school.
<b>Decisions</b>	Each participating team will be presented with enough data to make decisions and navigate through leadership issues in the Simulation. There will be consequences for every decision made. The consequences will be reflected in a subsequent event or in the simulation generated feedback.
<b>Consequences</b>	Consequences happen as the result of making decisions. Because different Simulation teams may make different decisions on the same event, they will experience different consequences. In other words, they will take different paths through the Simulation. The paths will converge at some point in the future. Thus, while they may experience different paths, all teams will play, essentially, the same Simulation. However, there may be a few exceptions. For example, some teams may make a decision that will land them on a “path that leads to disaster.” As in the real world, once they start the downward spiral, there will be no way out. There are very few of these situations in the library of Simulations.
<b>Feedback</b>	Many of the decisions made will be reflected in the feedback at the end of the Simulation. The Feedback will indicate how well the decisions made compare to best practices or other considerations for that scenario.
<b>Gauges/ Tradeoffs</b>	Many of the decisions made will be affect gauges shown on the screen in the simulation. Not all decisions will be reflected. For example, text input decisions, which are decisions where participants are asked to explain their thought process will be compared to best practices for that particular decision.

## **How does the Simulation Process Work?**

### **Simulation Play**

Ideally, the Simulation exercises should be conducted in teams consisting of 3 to 4 participants each; with a facilitator to monitor progress and lead debrief discussions. Each team should have a computer. Each team should designate one team member who will take charge of the mouse. When decisions are required, team members should discuss their individual insights/preferences and, ultimately, reach a consensus on which option they prefer as a team. The person controlling the mouse should then make the selection for the team by clicking the appropriate button within the Simulation.

During play, one of the facilitator's responsibilities should be to help teams maintain pace-of- play. The facilitator should visit each team regularly and provide comparative progress feedback to teams that are moving too quickly or too slowly. Encourage teams that may be moving too quickly to take more time and discuss each issue before deciding or encourage teams that may be taking too much time to decide more quickly.

The facilitator should monitor the decision-making processes to ensure that one team is not working too quickly or too slowly. If a team is working too quickly, they may not be having enough discussion before making decisions. If a team is working too slowly, they may be having too much discussion before making decisions.

### **Feedback**

Feedback may be viewed or printed at the end of each of simulation. For those decisions that are captured in the gauges, the simulation feedback will indicate the effects of the decision made.

### **Simulation Team Debrief Guidelines**

Give the teams 15 minutes to review their feedback at the end of the Simulation. Ask that each team to be prepared to discuss their decisions when the group reconvenes. It is a good idea to incorporate a break when the teams have finished their debriefs. This break provides the facilitator with time to prepare for the Large Group Debrief session.

### **Large Group Debrief Preparation**

In order to prepare for a class debrief, the facilitator may wish to play through the Simulation on their own before conducting the training session. Play the simulation several times and make different decisions to familiarize yourself with resulting consequences.

### **Conducting Class Debrief**

Reconvene the class after the simulations teams have completed their Simulation Team Debrief sessions. Begin the class debrief sessions by indicating that you want each team to review the choices made for each decision. Start with the first decision. Ask each team which choice option they chose and why. Ask what consequence they experienced as a result of making that choice. Compare responses from team to team. Remember, there are different paths and some events will not be seen by every team. Engage the class in a discussion of their choices vs. best practices. Look for opportunities to reference and reinforce other issues going on with the group or other PD they have gone through. Finally, pose a question similar to "What are the similarities between this issue in the simulation and issues in the real world? What options would be the most effective in the real world and why?" Use these questions to center the discussion on applying best practices from a simulated environment to the real-world environment.

## Sample Agenda

All ELS facilitated simulations are based on authentic leadership problems of school-based leaders. Attendees at sessions may include current building leaders at all levels (elementary and secondary) and in all leadership positions (e.g., Principals, Assistant/Vice Principals, Deans, etc.) as well as central office staff who work closely with and/or supervise building-level leaders. Sessions typically begin with an introduction to the context of the problem, continue with a small- or whole-group immersive learning experience, and conclude with discussions around the leadership decision-making within the scenario.

Some of the most significant learning outcomes from these facilitated sessions include:

- Surfacing of district priorities and leadership culture
- Sharing leadership decision-making strategies
- System-oriented thinking within leadership practices

Delivery Options:

<b><i>Session Type</i></b>	<b><i>Duration/Span</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>Full Day Leadership Decision-Making Institute</b>	One 6-hour session	Includes complete facilitation of all four simulations, using a variety of different facilitation strategies over the course of the day.
<b>Half Day Leadership Decision-Making Institute</b>	One or Two 3-hour session(s)	Each session will include facilitation of two different simulations. Sessions may be scheduled up to four months apart.
<b>Administrative Team Meeting-Embedded Professional Development</b>	Two, Three, or Four 45-minute to 1-hour sessions	A minimum of two and up to four sessions will be embedded in your regularly scheduled district administrative team meetings. Each session will include facilitation of one simulation. Sessions must be scheduled at least two weeks apart and up to six weeks apart.

Note: Programs may be customized to meet specific scheduling needs within your district. In addition, supplementary sessions on the same day(s) may be offered to administrative aspirants within the district.