



# Lesson Plan

## Poverty Simulation

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### Summary

1. Subject(s): Math, ELA
2. Objective: Students will reflect on the difficult decisions they made in the simulation, and come up with ways to help others in our surrounding community.

**SEL Goal:** Frontloading the activity with information will ultimately encourage the impact you are hoping for with this project. With some students who may be living this situation, provide avenues for them to access resources to help them. If you are concerned that it will have a negative impact on one or more students, I would encourage making this optional.

5. Time Allotment: 1 class period

### Directions

This can be done as either a whole-group activity or you can provide the link for your students (depending on technology availability.) I have done both, and in my experience, it has been more engaging to do as a whole group activity.

### Whole Group

To begin, I frontload how I want the activity to be managed. The entire activity is based on whether we can “survive 30 days of poverty” so it can come across as a challenge and/or game. The primary purpose of this activity is to have students place themselves in each scenario as if they were the ones making the choices. There are a few ways that I have done that:

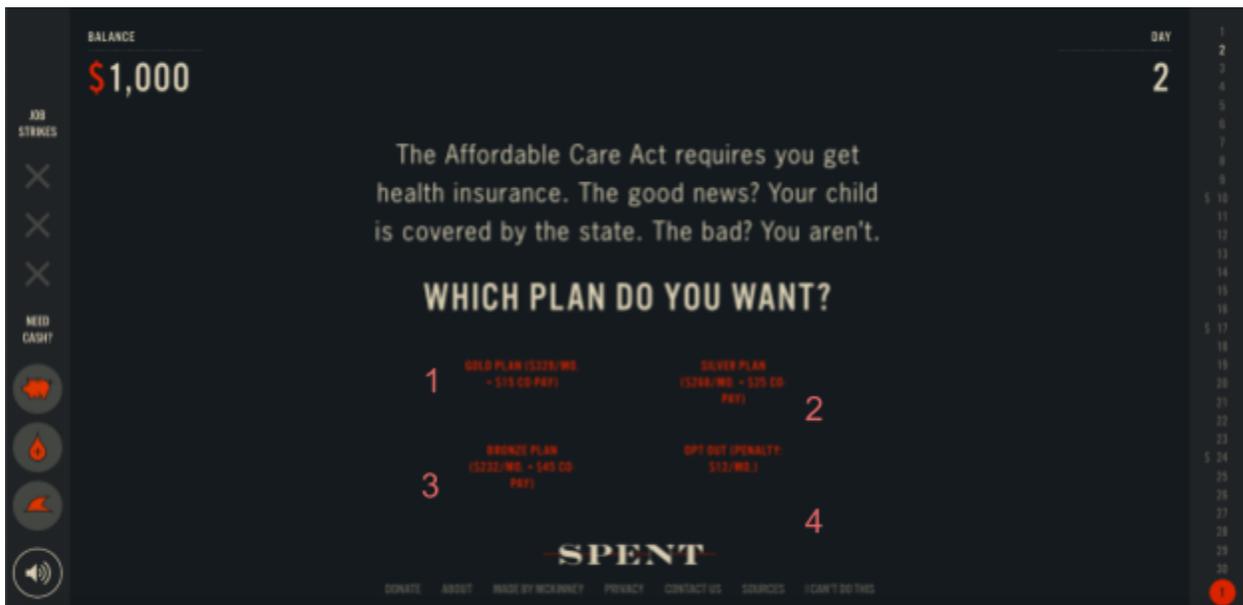
- The person who is making the choice is a father. One of the videos that I have suggested to watch is *Pursuit of Happyness* where Chris Gardner (Will Smith) has to make a series of



challenging choices to help his son. I use this as an anchor example to help my students understand the seriousness of the activity that I am expecting.

- If you haven't watched it, I would encourage students to make a fictional character that is an adult. I would also have them create a child to bring this scenario more to life. If there are prompts that are going to inevitably impact the child, I ask students to tap into their own experiences as a younger student. All of this provides the necessary tone that you are looking for with this activity.

While starting the activity as a whole group, I ask that my students remain silent until the each prompt is presented (there will be 30 of them). After a few seconds of personal reflection, have the students put up a number to the choice they think the entire group should make.



Majority wins. If you see that the numbers are close, open a discussion to see if anyone wants to choose their original answer. If you find that the majority of the students are not understanding the magnitude of their choices, provide them with a bigger picture of the impact they are choosing.

One of the (potential) prompts is based on whether the father should purchase a small \$10 gift for a birthday party his child is going to attend. Students have routinely made the choice not to buy it to save money. This is one that I routinely have to then talk about how impactful that could be due to the possibility that your child will be the only one coming without a gift.



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Go through the rest of the simulation, and then have students fill out their own reflection once it is finished. It's entirely up to you on whether you would allow the group to fail, or if you would redirect them toward a choice that would keep the simulation going.

## Individual Simulation

I would encourage students to understand the magnitude of each decision, and perhaps provide them with a “trial run” with a few prompts being done as a whole group. This way students understand fully how to navigate the simulation. There is an “ask a friend” option that promotes the use of social media. I would advise each student not to use that option and stick with the ones that don't require any additional assistance.

I would then make sure to roam around the room and promote the notion that students should ask questions if they are unsure on what each scenario is asking. There are a lot more than 30 prompts inside the simulation, so there is a high likelihood that some students will have a different experience.

I would be more lenient on allowing students to fail the simulation if they were working on it individually. If you notice that someone has to start over, approach them, and ask what happened. Then ask what would happen in real life if that were to be the case. This conversation (the connecting point of realizing that this family would then be homeless) has typically been the most impactful in my experience.

Once students finish the simulation, have them fill out the reflection sheet. I would then follow up with a brainstorming discussion on ways that you and your class can help others in the community.



## Poverty Simulation

**Directions:** First, make sure that you click “find a job” to participate in the simulation. Additionally, you will see a few opportunities to “ask help from a friend” but please refrain from that option.

**\*You can lose this game, which would end your simulation. Please re-try until you’ve “survived” 30 days to complete this reflection.\***

1. What job did you choose? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Why did you choose that job?
  
2. Which health insurance plan did you take? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Why did you make that choice?
  
3. How much did you choose for rent per month? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Why did you make that choice? What are some of the risks that you are taking with the decision you’ve made?
  
4. What was the first difficult decision you had to make in the simulation?
  - a. What did you decide? How do you feel about the choice that you made?
  
5. What was the second difficult decision you had to make in the simulation?



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- a. What did you decide? How do you feel about the choice that you made?
6. What was the third difficult decision you had to make in the simulation?
    - a. What did you decide? How do you feel about the choice that you made?
  7. How much did you spend on groceries?
    - a. How much did you spend?
  8. Of all the choices that you had to make, which one was the hardest?
    - a. Why?
  9. How many times did it take you to finish the simulation?
  10. After going through 30 days, what are some ways that we can do as a group to help community members who are in need?