



This guide and the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit professional learning website are designed for use by individual educators, cohorts, school communities, and school authorities.

www.fnmiprofessionallearning.ca/learning-to-relate/

This professional learning guide builds educator capacity by engaging community members through an interactive professional learning opportunity that builds understanding and awareness of issues related to poverty.



Participating in a **Community Action Poverty Simulation** (Missouri Community Action Network) allows educators to build awareness and develop their understanding of the issues related to poverty. As an engagement tool, a poverty simulation can bring together educators, support agencies, and community members promote and inspire positive change. Facilitation can include statistics and current contextual realities of poverty in your local area. This session is designed for senior administrators, school administrators, teachers, educational assistants, school psychologists, support staff, preservice teachers, community agencies, service organizations, and community members.

The first section of this guide includes information about organizing the simulation. The second section includes suggestions for using the poverty simulation as a community engagement tool. The third section includes debrief activities to engage in professional dialogue.



Getting Ready



Both the **Northwest Regional Learning Consortium** and **The Learning Network** are able to offer an opportunity for participants to experience what it might be like to live in a typical low-income family. It is a simulation designed to sensitize participants to the realities faced by low-income people.

In the simulation, up to 88 participants assume the roles of up to 26 different families facing poverty. Also, up to 20 volunteers take on the roles of “staffers,” which means they “work” in a variety of community agencies including community health care, Social Services, schools, grocery stores, and banks.

The actual simulation takes a maximum of three hours. Should you choose to host a simulation, you will work with the Consortium facilitator to recruit volunteers, if necessary, and to populate the variety of simulation roles.



Getting Ready

To learn more about the simulation, go to www.povertysimulation.org. While the simulation activity originated in the United States, there are many opportunities to contextualize and localize its context to reflect your regional community. The website provides details about why to host a simulation, what happens, as well as testimonials from educators and participants. Prior to hosting a poverty simulation, you may want to consider attending a simulation hosted by an educational community or by the United Way, such as that offered in Edmonton at www.myunitedway.ca/poverty-simulation/.

To learn more about hosting a **Community Action Poverty Simulation**, please contact one of the following consortia.

The Northwest Regional Learning Consortium

Grande Prairie, Alberta

Sandra Ciurysek, Executive Director

Telephone: 780-882-7988

Email: nrlcstaff@gppsd.ab.ca

The Learning Network

Lac La Biche, Alberta

Brent Allen, Executive Director

Telephone: 780-623-2248

Email: brent.allen@learning-network.org

Before hosting a simulation, it is important to let participants know that the session includes information about the realities and challenges associated with the issue of poverty. The topics and scenarios that come up during the simulation or debrief can trigger an emotional response. As a reminder to care for self and others, share regional contact information for mental health support networks; including, for example the Alberta Community and Social Services Support Line at 211. Check www.ab.211.ca/.



Making Connections



As a community engagement tool, the **Community Action Poverty Simulation** can provide an opportunity to gather senior administrators, school administrators, teachers, educational assistants, school psychologists, support staff, preservice teachers, community agencies, service organizations, and community members in an interactive and moving professional learning session.

Consider involving a school community, an inter-agency group, and/or a service organization. The participation of diverse groups provide opportunities to build awareness and connect resources. You may want to consider asking the community agencies and service organizations to bring materials and resources from their respective agencies and organizations to share with all participants. They may also want to provide a brief announcement during the debrief about the services they provide and the supports they can offer.

In creating the invitation list for participants, be sure to consider all of the educators who are associated with the emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual needs of students. A poverty simulation creates a relational space where educators and community members can learn from and with one another to build understanding and awareness of issues related to poverty.



Debriefing

Support



During the debrief, you may want to hold a Talking Circle. A **Fact Sheet**, at www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/talkingtogether/facilitated_talking_circle_fact_sheet.html, and **Sample**, found at www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/talkingtogether/facilitated_talking_circle_sample.html, are provided in the **Guide for the Walking Together Digital Resource**, accessed at www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/talkingtogether/index.html.

Questions for debriefing

How does understanding poverty impact your role in your educational community?

How can you contribute to supporting children in your educational community?

What can educators do in the classroom to best support students?

This guide was developed by the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia and funded through a grant from Alberta Education to support implementation. It is freely provided in support of improved teaching and learning under a Creative Commons license. This guide is based on:

Lalonde, S. Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia. (2016). *Provincial First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Professional Learning Project*. Calgary, AB: Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia.



Alberta Regional Consortia

