

Virtual PD: Improving Your Skills to Teach Sex Ed

Advocates for Youth has created **Virtual PD**, a simulated classroom with student avatars that allows professionals to practice the skills necessary to effectively teach sex education as outlined in the *Professional Learning Standards for Sex Education*. Time is sold in one-hour blocks and there are upper elementary, middle and high school classrooms to choose from. Research has shown that three 10 minute practice sessions in the simulator has a statistically significant impact on skill mastery*. Below outlines the range of options that can be used and their impact on professional development.

BEST IMPACT **One Teacher per Hour**

An educator selects up to two skills and a grade level to focus on during their hour of individualized time in the classroom simulator.

The educator is given up to 30 minutes or three 10 minute rotations to practice each of the two skills and is supported by an instructional coach with expertise in sex education.

This individualized session is tailored to each teacher, allowing for changes in the intensity of the session to challenge, but not overwhelm the educator. The session is designed to build maximum confidence and mastery for up to two skills.

Research demonstrates an individual hour in the simulator can yield mastery in up to two skills per hour.

GOOD IMPACT **Three Teachers per Hour**

Educators are put into groups of three and asked to jointly select a topic and grade level they all wish to master in the simulated classroom

Each educator is then given at least one or two 10 minute rotations in the simulated classroom to rehearse the skill during the five 10 minute rotations. They are both practicing and observing their colleagues as they focus on the same skill.

Supported by an instructional coach, this small group approach provides each teacher the opportunity to learn by doing and by observing. The needs of novice and veteran teachers can be met concurrently by tailoring the intensity of each 10 minute session to each educator.

This one hour session allows three teachers to experience significant improvement in one skill within the hour.

SOME IMPACT **Groups of Teachers per Hour**

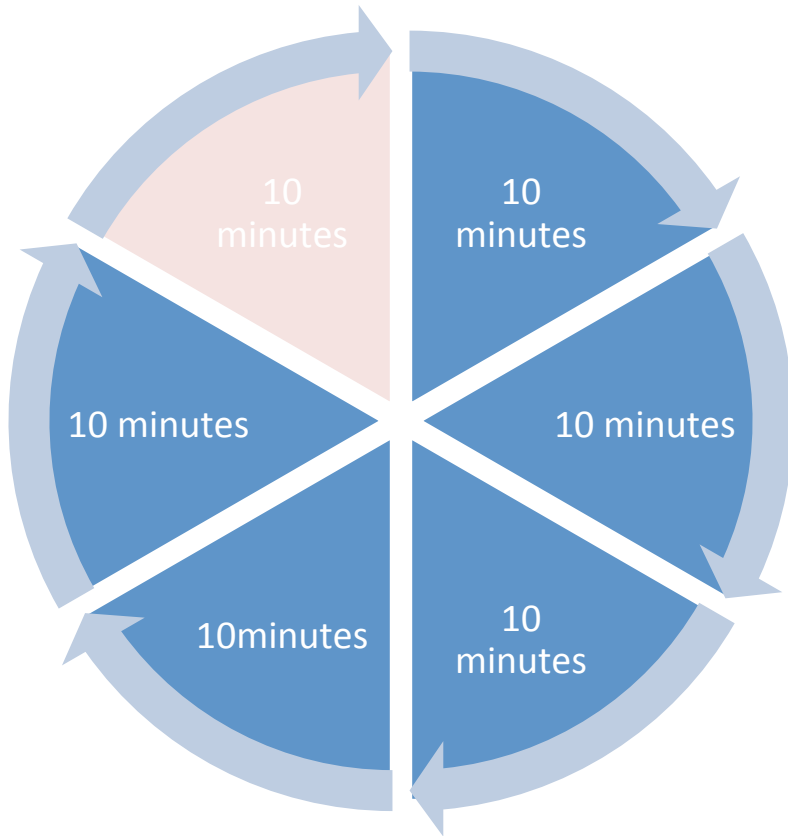
Up to five educators volunteer or are selected to “be” in the virtual classroom to practice a skill in front of a group of their peers. An instructional coach assists the educators to reflect on their sessions and improve their skills.

The peer group observes the practices used by the volunteer teachers then reflects on what they thought went well and what they might change. The instructional coach also reflects on the practice session, highlighting the high leverage practices that lead to effective instruction.

This hour allows the group to recognize the importance of key elements of a skill but does not allow each educator to practice.

A note about using this strategy: It is best to separate those practicing in the virtual classroom from those observing to reduce performance anxiety that might impact skill acquisition.

One Hour in the Simulated Classroom



One hour in the simulated classroom is divided into six 10-minute segments. An individual or group can practice skill acquisition **for five 10-minute segments for every hour purchased**. The time from the last 10 minute segment is used to transition to another educator, different skill or grade level.

During these five 10-minute segments, school districts or teachers can customize the way they use their time in the simulator to maximize its impact on teacher practice.

Options include:

- One teacher using all 5 rotations to master 1-2 skills.
- A trio of teachers honing one skill as they rehearse the skill individually in the simulated classroom and observe the two other educators as they rehearse. There is time for feedback and reflection between and among participants and the instructional coach.
- A group of teachers watching up to 5 of their peers volunteer to practice in the simulated classroom. The group observing has time to discuss and reflect will not have the opportunity to practice in the simulated classroom during that hour.

* Straub, C., Dieker, L., Hynes, M., And Hughes, C. (2015, June). Using Virtual Rehearsal in TLE TeachLivE Mixed Reality Classroom Simulator to Determine the Effects on the Performance of Science Teachers: A Follow-up Study (Year 2).