

Adding **SWAG** to Simulations: Storyline Wonder Authenticity Grit

Planning Simulations

So how do you plan a simulation? We're sure there are multiple ways but we will share the process we've used successfully.

1. Begin with a theme.
2. Work to really understand your theme. Look up definitions, synonyms, and do a Google search on the theme and just see what comes up.
3. Think of something "outside the box" that you'd like to try.
4. Brainstorm
 - a. It's good to have some colleagues!
 - b. Use the research you gathered on your theme to think about and/or engage in discussions. Entertain all the possibilities you might use in your lessons.
5. Walk away and come back to it later.
 - a. It grows! We usually brainstorm and walk away multiple times before the concept begins to truly take shape.
6. Start breaking the concepts into sections and topics.
7. Once the topics/curriculum that you want to teach take shape, then decide the processes and the products.
8. Be okay with a lot of ambiguity for a time. Many parts of your simulation may begin conceptual but eventually it will all come together.

SWAG is important for creating successful simulations with high student engagement. It provides for rigor, requires social interaction, integrates technology, and stimulates critical and creative thinking and problem solving.

Storyline: It's important to have a good storyline to grab and hook the students.

- a. Your initial storyline gets students to buy into the experience of the simulation. This grabs their attention and makes them start wondering what is going to happen next.
- b. Storyline goes beyond the initial hook. It flows through everything you do and keeps students engaged. It focuses your simulation. You can't walk in with music, bright lights, and costumes and then just do the same thing you've been doing. You must think and work to make it seem as real as possible.

Wonder: Always keep students wondering what will happen next. Don't be predictable. Add "surprises", twists, and turns to your storyline. Keep building the story...don't reveal it all at once.

Authenticity: Make your simulation as close to real life as possible. It will take some creativity and thinking outside of the box, but the more authentic your simulation, the more the students will lose themselves in it and enjoy the experience.

Grit: Finally, be sure that you incorporate a variety of activities so that at least one will cause students to have to be gritty; incorporate activities that require perseverance.

Whether you implement a simulation for an hour, a day, a week, or a semester, adding SWAG will make learning come alive for your students.