



# TEACHER PREP MATERIALS

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## **LIVES IN BALANCE AT A GLANCE** **3**

Here you'll find an overview of the purpose, core features, and implementation basics of *Lives in Balance*.

## **TEACHER CHECKLIST** **4**

Keep this checklist handy throughout implementation for a step-by-step guide to preparing for, participating in, and debriefing *Lives in Balance*.

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Consult this detailed guide to find the logistical set-up for *Lives in Balance* that will work best for your classroom and schedule.

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Consider using this worksheet to organize your notes as you observe your class's simulation.

## **LIVES IN BALANCE SYNOPSIS AND DECISIONS** **11**

Look to this brief guide for the major plot points and decisions your students will encounter in *Lives in Balance*.

## **BASIC TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE FOR VIDEO CONFERENCING SOFTWARE** **14**

Look here for help if you're playing *Lives in Balance* virtually and have some trouble with your video conferencing platform. Students receive this guide in their Character Sheet Packets, too.

**To view a black and white, printer-friendly version of this packet, click [here](#).**





# TEACHER CHECKLIST

ITHRIVE SIM: LIVES IN BALANCE ■■■■■■■■■■

TEACHER  
PREP

\*Steps marked with an asterisk are required. Other steps are recommended.

## PRE-SIMULATION CHECKLIST

- **\*Implementation Guide:** Review guidelines to choose the most appropriate setup for your students.
- **\*Role Assignment Sheet:** Divide the students in each class that will be playing *Lives in Balance* into groups of six, and then assign each student a role within their group.
- **\*Lives in Balance Trailer:** Play for students.
- **\*Character Sheet Packets:** Send to students and ask them to review their roles and complete the Role Reflection Exercise (individually or together in class).
  - [Student Role: California Governor](#)
  - [Student Role: Arizona Governor](#)
  - [Student Role: Nevada Governor](#)
  - [Student Role: Principal Deputy Director, CDC](#)
  - [Student Role: New Mexico Governor](#)
  - [Student Role: US Deputy Secretary of Commerce](#)
- **\*Pre-Simulation PowerPoint:** Show to students, discuss, and answer questions.
- **\*iThrive Sim Interface Tutorial Video:** Have students preview the steps they'll take to play.
- **Optional Pre-Simulation Activities and Materials:** Offer the additional curricular content of your choice to frame the scenario and amplify civic and social and emotional learning.

## SIMULATION CHECKLIST

- You and all students log onto the platform following the instructions provided to you via email.
- **Teacher Observation Log:** Organize your notes as you observe a simulation either live or via recording (as applicable).
- **Basic Troubleshooting for Video Conferencing Software:** Refer to this for guidance using and resolving technical issues within video conferencing software during play.

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- **\*De-role:** Guide students in letting go of the roles they played.
- **\*Campfire:** Discuss with students what happened and what comes next.
- **Optional Post-Simulation Activities and Materials:** Offer the additional curricular content of your choice to extend learning from the scenario.



## OPTION #2: SOME STUDENTS OBSERVE

### USE THIS APPROACH IF:

- You are working with a full class.
- Options 3-4 below are not possible for you but you still want to use *iThrive Sim*, even if not every student gets to play one of the six character roles.

### STEPS:

- Schedule your simulation and set up a video conferencing call, and invite all of your students.
- Identify and recruit six of your students to play.
- Assign the six roles to the students who will be playing using the [Role Assignment Sheet](#).
- Have the six students play their roles while the rest of the class observes via the video conferencing software.
- We recommend giving observing students a task to support engagement. For example, you might ask observers to use the [Decision-Making Rubric](#) to analyze how different characters are demonstrating aspects of that decision-making process.

**NOTE:** We don't recommend that observing students login to the *iThrive Sim* platform using the Observer login. A primary reason is that the Observer role in the platform allows chirping and direct messaging, but is anonymous, so the platform won't be able to tell you which person wrote which material.

### PROS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

- A class that wouldn't otherwise be able to participate in *iThrive Sim* can still get a taste of the experience.
- Six students get to play character roles.
- Scheduling and logistical setup are straightforward.
- The teacher can observe the session in its entirety.

### CONS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

- Many/most students don't get to play a character role.
- If you choose to run the simulation again with the same class, those who observed will already know what happens in the scenario.

## OPTION #3: MULTIPLE GROUPS OF SIX, ONE AT A TIME

### USE THIS APPROACH IF:

- You are working with a full class.
- You want each of your students to play one of the six roles written for the simulation.
- Your schedule allows for multiple groups of 6 to play at different times or on different days.

### STEPS:

- Divide your students into groups of six.
- Schedule as many game sessions and video conference calls as you need (one per group of six) for different days/times.
- Assign the six roles to the students in each group using the [Role Assignment Sheet](#).
- Plan to join and observe each session.

### VARIATIONS:

- Groups of five can play, just don't assign the Deputy Secretary of Commerce role.
- Some students can play twice, in two different sessions, if you need to fill a group that's too small.

#### PROS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

- Every student plays one of the six character roles.
- The teacher can observe each session in its entirety.

#### CONS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

- It requires you to devote more than one class session to the simulation.

## OPTION 4: MULTIPLE GROUPS OF SIX, ALL AT ONCE

### USE THIS APPROACH IF:

- You are working with a full class.
- You want each of your students to play one of the six roles written for the simulation.
- All the groups of six must play at the same time on the same day.

### STEPS:

- Divide your students into groups of six.
- Schedule as many game sessions as you need (one per group) for the same day and time.
- Assign the six roles to the students in each group using the [Role Assignment Sheet](#).
- Give each group their own virtual space for the simulation. Do this by setting up a video conference call with breakout rooms (if allowed at your school), or schedule multiple video calls that you can launch at the same time.

### VARIATIONS:

- Groups of five can play, just don't assign the Deputy Secretary of Commerce role.
- If you have one group left over that's smaller than five and you can't identify other volunteers (TAs, other teachers, etc.) to play roles, consider having those remaining students observe the simulation. Give them a specific task to do while they watch.
- If it is available to you, recruit other teachers or TAs to help you observe and supervise groups.
- Some teachers use a browser extension or an app that splits their screen to observe multiple virtual groups of students in different sessions at once.

### PROS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

- It requires only one class period.
- Every student plays one of the six character roles.
- Teachers can drop into each breakout room to observe the sessions.

### CONS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

- It is possible, but logistically more challenging, to create breakout rooms or multiple video conferencing sessions and to launch multiple game sessions in different game rooms at the same time.
- The primary teacher of the class cannot observe each session in its entirety.

## OVERVIEW

Use this graphic organizer as one way to capture your observations, questions, and ideas as you observe your students playing *iThrive Sim: Lives in Balance*. Record notes that will support you in guiding a meaningful debriefing session and preparing students to apply and extend what they've learned.

## TIME

45 minutes (the length of the simulation)

## SEQUENCE

Use while you observe your students playing the simulation (either live or recorded).

We recommend using this in combination with [Decision-Making Rubric](#) and [Pre-Simulation Norms Discussion](#).

## INSTRUCTIONS

**STEP 1:** Remember that the goal of the simulation is for students to connect meaningfully, apply knowledge, and exercise social and emotional skills. As you get ready to observe this group, what are your intentions for watching and listening to your students as they play?



**STEP 2:** Using the graphic organizer on the next page, capture your notes as you observe the simulation.

GROUP:

DATE:

**FACTUAL UNDERSTANDING:** Is there content you need to follow up on to ensure understanding?

**DECISION-MAKING** (See [Decision-Making Rubric](#)): What do you notice about how students are understanding and articulating the questions, information, options, and consequences at hand?

**APPRECIATIONS:** What's one behavior or comment you notice from each player that you want to praise publicly (all players experience one appreciation)?

**NORMS FEEDBACK** (See [Norms Discussion](#)): How are student behaviors aligning with norms your class has established?

**NOTE:** The *iThrive Sim* platform offers a pause function. If you know (ahead of time or in the moment) that your students need a chance to explore more deeply, re-read supporting documents, get clarity on the tasks at hand, etc., press pause to build in that opportunity.

Refer to this guide as needed to find the key plot points and decisions players make in *Lives in Balance*. **Spoiler Alert:** Do not share this guide with students before they play.

## OVERVIEW

In *Lives in Balance*, students play the roles of four state governors and two federal officials. The governors of Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico have formed a Southwest States Coalition to coordinate a response to a global virus pandemic. The Principal Deputy Director for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Deputy Secretary of Commerce each have a stake in the Coalition’s deliberations and will join the Coalition members in an emergency meeting to promote their respective agendas as they relate to the states’ re-opening plans.

Players face two primary decisions in the roughly 45-minute simulation: (1) determine whether two proposed Bubble Plans — which would allow for fan-free, socially distanced Major League Baseball (MLB) games in Arizona and National Football League (NFL) games in Nevada — are worth the potential risk to public health, and (2) determine whether states should close their borders to reduce the spread of the virus.

The simulation unfolds in three segments:

1. **Opening (~3 minutes long):** Players review materials and prepare their arguments.
2. **Coalition Meeting One (~20 minutes long):** Players discuss and then vote to approve or deny Arizona’s and Nevada’s Bubble Plans.
3. **Coalition Meeting Two (~22 minutes long):** Players discuss and then vote on whether to close state borders to prevent further spread of the virus.

Grappling with ever-evolving data and circumstances, students—in their roles—must decide how to balance the physical health of the nation with the health of the economy.

## OPENING (~3 MINUTES)

The simulation launches on the *iThrive Sim* platform with an introductory video that orients players to the scenario and the Bubble Plan proposals for Arizona and Nevada. This reinforces and extends information in students’ character sheet packets, which they will have received and reviewed before the simulation started. In the brief Opening segment, the six players spend a few moments on the platform reviewing information they’ll need to draw on throughout the session and preparing their characters and talking points. Players will use various documents they find on the platform to make their case throughout the session, including information on current virus case numbers, unemployment rates, memos, direct messages from other players, news articles, social media chirps, and more.

## COALITION MEETING ONE (~20 MINUTES)

Coalition Meeting One begins roughly three minutes into the simulation. The facilitator should prompt the student playing the Arizona Governor to kick off the meeting by facilitating introductions of all characters. The Arizona Governor then should try to build enthusiasm among the other Coalition members for their MLB Bubble Plan. The Nevada Governor is likely to jump in and seek support for a parallel NFL Bubble Plan in their state. Both governors will have the support of the Deputy Secretary of Commerce, who wants to see states' economies weather the impact of the virus.

The California and New Mexico Governors and the Principal Deputy Director of the CDC, meanwhile, are encouraged via their character sheets and other guiding documents to argue for a cautious virus response that prioritizes the physical health of state residents over economic interests.

The main decision players must make in this segment is whether to approve or deny the two proposed Bubble Plans. At the end of Coalition Meeting One, a majority vote is held. Students either:

1. Vote to reject the Bubble Plans for Arizona and Nevada.
2. Vote to approve the Bubble Plans for Arizona and Nevada.
3. Vote to approve only the MLB Bubble Plan for Arizona.
4. Vote to approve only the NFL Bubble Plan for Nevada.

After this vote, the meeting ends and an in-simulation month passes before Coalition Meeting Two, where players will find out what happened as a result of their decisions in Coalition Meeting One.

## COALITION MEETING TWO (~22 MINUTES)

The story arc of the final segment of the simulation depends on the decisions made in the previous segment. Were the Bubble Plans approved? Did Arizona's economy open up? How about Nevada's? What were the impacts on the virus outbreak and the economy? Did the characters' relationships weaken, or were they made stronger by the negotiations in Coalition Meeting One? In Coalition Meeting Two, players deal with the repercussions of their most recent decisions.

Coalition Meeting Two starts with a video that orients players to what happened as a result of their last vote:

COALITION MEETING ONE MAJORITY VOTE OUTCOME	COALITION MEETING TWO INTRODUCTORY VIDEO SYNOPSIS
<b>Players reject the Bubble Plans for Arizona and Nevada.</b>	One month ago, the Arizona governor decided not to move forward with the Bubble Plan. However, thousands of fans still flocked to the state, and now hospitals are overcrowded and virus cases are spiking. The Southwest States Coalition is meeting to address the virus spike.

COALITION MEETING ONE MAJORITY VOTE OUTCOME	COALITION MEETING TWO INTRODUCTORY VIDEO SYNOPSIS
<b>Players approve the Bubble Plans for Arizona and Nevada.</b>	One month ago, Arizona moved forward with the Bubble Plan for Major League Baseball. Now, virus cases are spiking and hospitals are crowded. The governor is under attack and needs to get the situation under control. The Southwest States Coalition is having a meeting to address the virus spike.

Players discuss ideas for slowing the spread of the virus in line with their characters' goals. Near the end of this meeting, players must decide between:

1. Voting to close some or all of the state borders to prevent further spread of the virus.
2. Voting to keep all state borders open.

The majority vote will launch the final video of the session, which shares the outcome of the simulation:

COALITION MEETING TWO MAJORITY VOTE OUTCOME	FINAL VIDEO SYNOPSIS
<b>Players close some or all of the state borders.</b>	The decision to close state borders causes a public fight between the state and federal governments. Both argue that they each have the right to make a decision on closing borders and the issue goes to the Supreme Court.
<b>Players keep all state borders opens.</b>	The decision to keep borders open causes the virus to spread into other states, creating a second wave. The federal government advises the states to return to a pre-phase one lockdown with strict stay-at-home orders. The open question remains: Will the states comply?

At this point, the simulation ends and students log off of the platform. A summary will be available that captures the decisions players made in each segment.





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Grappling with ever-evolving data and circumstances, students—in their roles—must decide how to balance the physical health of the nation with the health of the economy.

## OPENING (~3 MINUTES)

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## COALITION MEETING ONE (~20 MINUTES)

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2. Vote to approve the Bubble Plans for Arizona and Nevada.
3. Vote to approve only the MLB Bubble Plan for Arizona.
4. Vote to approve only the NFL Bubble Plan for Nevada.

After this vote, the meeting ends and an in-simulation month passes before Coalition Meeting Two, where players will find out what happened as a result of their decisions in Coalition Meeting One.

## COALITION MEETING TWO (~22 MINUTES)

The story arc of the final segment of the simulation depends on the decisions made in the previous segment. Were the Bubble Plans approved? Did Arizona's economy open up? How about Nevada's? What were the impacts on the virus outbreak and the economy? Did the characters' relationships weaken, or were they made stronger by the negotiations in Coalition Meeting One? In Coalition Meeting Two, players deal with the repercussions of their most recent decisions.

Coalition Meeting Two starts with a video that orients players to what happened as a result of their last vote:

COALITION MEETING ONE MAJORITY VOTE OUTCOME	COALITION MEETING TWO INTRODUCTORY VIDEO SYNOPSIS
<b>Players reject the Bubble Plans for Arizona and Nevada.</b>	One month ago, the Arizona governor decided not to move forward with the Bubble Plan. However, thousands of fans still flocked to the state, and now hospitals are overcrowded and virus cases are spiking. The Southwest States Coalition is meeting to address the virus spike.

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Players discuss ideas for slowing the spread of the virus in line with their characters' goals. Near the end of this meeting, players must decide between:

1. Voting to close some or all of the state borders to prevent further spread of the virus.
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The majority vote will launch the final video of the session, which shares the outcome of the simulation:

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<b>Players close some or all of the state borders.</b>	The decision to close state borders causes a public fight between the state and federal governments. Both argue that they each have the right to make a decision on closing borders and the issue goes to the Supreme Court.
<b>Players keep all state borders opens.</b>	The decision to keep borders open causes the virus to spread into other states, creating a second wave. The federal government advises the states to return to a pre-phase one lockdown with strict stay-at-home orders. The open question remains: Will the states comply?

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