



Activity on Access to Education: The Test

The Test Summary

- Provides young people with a simulated experience of being discriminated against with regard to education.
- Participants will take the perspective of someone who is being discriminated against or does not have access to education.

Purpose

Provides young people with a simulated experience of being discriminated against in their right to education

Objectives

1. Gives participants an experience that makes discrimination concrete for them, and helps them to understand what children throughout the world are exposed to.
2. Prompts participants to think critically about their opportunities living in an industrialized nation such as the United States.

Materials

One sheet of paper and a pencil or pen for every participant

Procedure

1. Have participants mark with tape a rectangle on the floor equal to one eighth of its area. (This can be done by measuring off a rectangle whose width is half the width of the room, and whose length is one quarter the length of the room). If the room contains moveable furniture, you can have the group move one eighth of the total number of desks, tables or chairs into the area that is one eighth of the floor space, and leave the rest in the larger area.
2. Ask the group to make two piles with the sheets of paper, one pile should contain one eighth of the total number of sheets, the other the remaining seven eighths. Have the students do the same with the pencils.
3. Have participants divide themselves into two groups, representing one eighth and seven eighths of the group, respectively.
4. Tell the smaller group to take seats in the larger area of the room. The larger group takes seats in the smaller area of the room. (It should be left to the students to decide how to do this. If they object, remind them firmly that these are the conditions under which the activity is going to be carried out.) **Do not distribute pencils (or pens) and paper at this time.**
5. Tell the entire group that they are going to take a spelling and math test. This is a very important test, and their scores will determine whether they will be allowed to continue on with their education. Tell the students that they must score a 70% or better on the test to qualify. Explain that you will dictate five spelling words and five math problems, and that they must write the answers on their own sheet of paper.
6. Distribute the larger pile of paper and pencils to the smaller group, and the smaller pile to the larger group (materials will be disproportionate to group sizes). Any objections by the students should be dismissed by saying, "Just do the best you can with what you have." The students should not be allowed to leave their assigned area, or to share materials with the other area.
7. Begin dictating words at a fairly fast pace, but one which the participants in the smaller group can keep up with (both spelling words and math problems should be challenging but not impossible for the group). Quickly move on to the math problems.

8. Ask the group to grade each other's papers, and determine who has passed, and who has not. In all likelihood, all of the people in the smaller group will have passed, while few, if any, in the larger group will have scored 70%. Recognize the students who have passed, and congratulate them on moving on to the next grade.

Wrap Up

At this point, the participants will probably have strong feelings about the activity and the lack of equity that they have experienced. Explain to them that this has been a simulation, and the purpose was to get them to reflect on the impact of discrimination in education, such these facts:

120 million children across the globe do not have access to education, and more than half are girls.

50% of the world's children did not have access to education in the 1980s but that number has increased to more than 80%, due in part to UNICEF's work.

Let the participants know that this simulation is based on statistics in South Africa under apartheid laws in the mid-1980's. At that time, white South Africans made up just over one eighth of the population. The per capita school expenditure for black South African children was approximately one eighth the amount spent on white children.

Discuss the following questions with the group:

- How did the larger group feel during the activity? Why?
- What strategies did the larger group use to complete the test?
- How did the smaller group feel during the activity? Why?
- What, if anything, did the members of the larger group think about doing in response to the unjust situation? What did they actually do about it?
- What, if anything, did the smaller group think about doing in response to the situation? What did they actually do about it?
- How would this type of distribution of resources interfere with the educational success for the larger group in the long term?
- How would this type of distribution of resources place the smaller group at an advantage for the long term?
- What does an organization like UNICEF fit into the process?
- How does Operation Uruguay help provide young people with basic education and skill development?