**Protocol for Using Scenarios in the LA Pedagogy Course**

1. Immediately after our daily discussion of “wins and fails” in their LA work, introduce the activity as a way to help us think about navigating difficult interactions.
2. Assign LAs to groups of four or five that are mixed across supported courses (\*Note that they usually work in the course groups in the LA Pedagogy class. Mix them up for this activity).
   1. Ask them to introduce themselves to each other if they don’t know everyone in the group.
3. Have each group select two or three members to role play for the scenario.
4. Provide 15 minutes of class time for the groups to role play the scenarios and discuss the guiding questions.
5. Reconvene as a whole class and have each group briefly summarize their scenario and their reaction to it.
6. Lead the whole class discussion to synthesize some takeaway points from the activity, and close by generating specific strategies for the LAs to try to employ in their work during the coming week.

**Scenario 1: The strong, silent type**

Setting the scene:

Sarah is a first-year learning assistant in a large undergraduate class. Today in class students are doing a worksheet. The class that Sara LAs for has weekly group active learning that students are expected to participate equally in. Sarah walks around her section working with several groups to help them with questions they have and keep the students on tasks. As Sarah walks around, she notices that in one of her groups there is one individual, Brian, that is on his phone and clearly not engaged with the rest of the group who are all working on the assignment. The role play begins with Sarah approaching the group.

(Do I need to identify different entry points for the role play?)

*Dialogue 1:*

Sarah – “Hey guys how’s the worksheet coming along?”

Brian - \*notices Sarah and quickly hides phone\* “We are doing ok.”

Sarah – “Brian, can you explain to me what is going on here?” \*points to a picture on the worksheet\*

Brian – \*looking nervously and quizzically at Sarah\* “Umm . . . . . I’m not sure what that is”

Sarah – “What can you tell me about how the cell generates its own energy?”

Brian – \*hesitantly says\* “The cell makes ATP out of sugar.”

Sarah – \*says smiling\* “That’s right. How does the cell make ATP?”

Brian – \*with slightly more confidence\* “Umm . . . . using a gradient.”

Sarah – \*nodding affirmingly\* “Right again. Where does that gradient get established?”

Brian – “I think the mitochondrial membrane”

Sarah – “Which one, the inner or outer membrane?”

Brian – “Inner?”

Sarah – “Right.” \*addressed the group\* “Ok, now that I’ve got you all on the right path, why don’t you continue working on the sheet as a team and I’ll be back a little later to check in. Sound good?”

\*the group nods and Sarah walks away to work with another group\*

*Dialogue 2:*

Sarah – “Hey guys how’s the worksheet coming along?”

Brian - \*notices Sarah and quickly hides phone\* “We are doing ok.”

Sarah – “Brian, I noticed that you are not participating at the same levels as your other group members. Are you not familiar with the material?”

Brian – \*looking embarrassed\* “I’m not sure.”

Sarah - \*talking to Brian\* “What’s the answer to the next question on the worksheet?”

Brian - \*quizzically looks at Sarah after reading the question\* “I don’t know.”

Sarah – \*says to the rest of the group\* “Does anyone else know the answer?”

\*no one answers and Brian sheepishly looks at his shoes and does not respond\*

Sarah – \*says authoritatively\* “Brian, the answer is right there in your book, what does your book say about ATP synthase?”

Brian - \*flips to page on ATP synthase and scans the page\* “IT generates ATP.”

Sarah – “Yes. Now was that hard? When I come back later I expect your group to report on how many of those answers you have contributed to.”

\*Sarah walks away to work with another group\*

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**Scenario 2: Will**

Setting the scene:

Avery is a first-year LA who holds office hours outside of lecture for students to come and ask questions about what they did or did not understand from the material covered in class the previous week. Avery had learning assistants in his class last year and enjoyed working with them so much that he decided to sign up for the LA program. The scenario begins at Avery’s office hour after the class first exam. There are 7 students who have come to Avery with questions on the exam. As the students begin to pose their questions, one of the students, Will, answers each question sometimes even before the students finish asking the question. If anyone disagrees with his answers, Will argues with them till they drop their argument. The role-play pics up after the 5th question.

*Dialogue 1:*

Avery – “Lilly what was your next question?”

Lilly - \*looks nervously at Will then at Avery\* “What was the answer to the question Dr. Martin asked on founder?”

Will - \*laughs\* “The question on founder effect? That’s easy, the answer was genetic drift, everyone knows that! Don’t you have any challenging questions?”

\*Lilly’s face turns red as a mixture of embarrassment and anger take hold\*

Avery – \*says calmly but firmly\* “Will, just because you think an answer is obvious doesn’t mean that it is obvious to everyone.” “Lilly what can you tell me about founder effect? How would you define?”

Will - \*abruptly interrupts\* “That was in our book and in your lecture. How can she possibly not know what founder effect is?”

Avery – \*annoyed\* “Will, I asked Lilly to answer. Will you please show some respect and let her answer the question?”

Lilly – “I’m not sure, but I think founder”

Will – \*interrupts again\* “But I have REAL questions you need to answer.”

Avery – “Will I will gladly answer your question after Lilly answers my question.”

Will – “Fine.”

*Dialogue 2:*

Avery – “Lilly what was your next question?”

Lilly - \*looks nervously at Will then at Avery\* “What was the answer to the question Dr. Martin asked on founder?”

Will - \*laughs\* “The question on founder effect? That’s easy, the answer was genetic drift, everyone knows that! Don’t you have any challenging questions?”

\*Lilly’s face turns red as a mixture of embarrassment and anger take hold\*

Avery - \*ignoring will\* “Lilly, why don’t you tell me what you know about founder effect?”

Will - \*butting in\* “Obviously the founder effect is . . . “

Avery – \*cutting off Will sharply\* “Will, did I ask you tell me about founder effect?”

Will – “Lilly wasn’t going to answer the question anyway. Were you Lilly? You obviously have not understood the chapter all that well”

Avery - \*getting agitated\* “Shut up Will. I’ve had enough of your rude behavior.”

Will – \*laughing as he knows he’s gotten under Avery’s skin and is now the center of attention\* “Calm down dude, I’m helping her out.”

Avery – \*gritting his teeth\* “If we need your help, I will ask for it so let Lilly answer the question.”

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**Scenario 3: I am inadequate**

Setting the scene:

Eva is a junior bio-premed major and a first year LA who assists a lecturer, Dr. Smith, in a large introductory cell course. Today, the instructor has let Eva lead a clicker question set that the instructor has used in his class for years on the differences between photosynthesis and cellular respiration. To prepare, Eva has gone over her notes from when she was in the class, but she has not had a class that deals with photosynthesis since she was in Dr. Smith’s class her freshman year. The scenario begins with Eva presenting a clicker question to the class.

*Dialogue 1:*

Eva – “Ok class, the next question is asks, ‘Which process occurs more rapidly? A. Photosynthesis, B. Cellular Respiration, or C. They occur at similar speeds.’ You have 30 seconds to answer the question starting now.”

\*28 seconds later\*

Eva – “So let’s see how you did.”

\*Eva looks at distribution which is 40% A, 40% B, and 20% C\*

Eva - “So it looks like you need to talk to your groups about it so go ahead and turn and talk in your groups and I’ll walk around to assist you. To help you answer the question, think about what the processes produce.”

\*The groups start to discuss and one of the students in one of the groups, Kim, raises her hand to call Eva over to answer a question\*

Kim – “Hey Eva, we remember Dr. Smith saying that photosynthesis occurs faster, but what we cannot remember is why. Can you help us out?”

Eva – \*thinks about it for a second\* “You know I’m not sure, let me look in my book.”

Kim - \*before Eva can walk away\* “Why don’t you know the answer to the question? Aren’t you leading the class today? If you don’t know then how can we be expected to know?

\*Eva turns red with embarrassment and shame\*

Eva – “Your right Kim.” \*Eva stammers\* “I should know it. I’m sorry. I’ll try to make sure I know the material better next time.”

Kim – “Good! So, who should I get the answer from then?”

\*dejectedly Eva reaches for her book, turns to the appropriate pages, and hands the book to Kim.\*

Eva – “Hear you read it.” \*She says with a quiver in her voice\*. “I don’t want to mess up again.”

\*Feeling dejected, Eva does not talk to any other groups one-on-one and chooses instead to go on lecturing.\*

*Dialogue 2:*

Eva – “Ok class, the next question is asks, ‘Which process occurs more rapidly? A. Photosynthesis, B. Cellular Respiration, or C. They occur at similar speeds.’ You have 30 seconds to answer the question starting now.”

\*28 seconds later\*

Eva – “So let’s see how you did.”

\*Eva looks at distribution which is 40% A, 40% B, and 20% C\*

Eva - “So it looks like you need to talk to your groups about it so go ahead and turn and talk in your groups and I’ll walk around to assist you. To help you answer the question, think about what the processes produce.”

\*The groups start to discuss and one of the students in one of the groups, Kim, raises her hand to call Eva over to answer a question\*

Kim – “Hey Eva, we remember Dr. Smith saying that photosynthesis occurs faster, but what we cannot remember is why. Can you help us out?”

Eva – \*thinks about it for a second\* “You know I’m not sure, let me look in my book.”

Kim - \*before Eva can walk away\* “Why don’t you know the answer to the question? Aren’t you leading the class today? If you don’t know then how can we be expected to know?

Eva - \*slightly embarrassed\* “You know we don’t know everything and in this particular case, I want to be sure I give you correct information. Let’s figure out the answer to the questions together.”

Kim – “Ok.”

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**Scenario 4: The “enthusiasmless” group**

Setting the scene:

Antonio is a first semester LA in Dr. Simkins’s biochemistry class. As part of Antonio’s LA responsibilities, he holds weekly review sessions for all of Dr. Simkins’s sections. As most of Dr. Simpkins exams are application questions, Antonio uses similar questions in his review sessions to help students prepare for exams. As most students are not use to having application questions, Antonio assigns the students into groups to work through the problems. We begin this role-play after Antonio as assigned a problem on calcium ion channels to his students to work on and he is now walking around the room helping groups work though the problems. He notices a group that is not talking and they are also on their phones. Antonio walks over to the group to see what is going on.

*Dialogue 1:*

Antonio: “Hey guys, how’s it going?”

Bethany: ”It’s going ok.” \*Bethany says with a “I’m bored” tone.

Antonio: “I noticed that you guys are all on your phones, are you guys all done?”

Bethany: “Yes we are.”

Antonio: “Well let me see your work then.”

\*Bethany shows Antonio the paper\*

Antonio: “I see you guys didn’t write very much for these answers. Do you guys think you could put some more effort into your answers?”

\*the group groans\*

Bethany: “How many more sentences do you want us to write?”

Antonio: “Enough so that you thoroughly explain the answer.”

Mark: “But I thought we had explained it enough. What else is there left to write?”

Antonio: “Just write two more sentences per question and that should be sufficient.”

\*Mark and Bethany groan\*

Mark: “If we have to write two more to make you happy, then that is what we will do.”

*Dialogue 2*

Antonio: “Hey guys, how’s it going?”

Bethany: ”It’s going ok.” \*Bethany says with a “I’m bored” tone.

Antonio: “I noticed that you guys are all on your phones, are you guys all done?”

Bethany: “Yes we are.”

Antonio: “Well let me see your work then.”

\*Bethany shows Antonio the paper\*

Antonio: “Can you guys tell me how you came to your answer for question 2?”

Bethany: “Well we remembered that Dr. Simpkins had a slide on this topic, so Mark pulled out his notes and we wrote down what was in our notes.”

Antonio: “Ok, but since I know Dr. Simpkins will ask you questions like this on the exam, it is important that you guys are able to demonstrate how you got to that answer so why don’t you guys tell me what you know. Pretend I have no idea how you got to that answer and explain it to me.”

Mark: “Well to being with we know that for a signal to travel from one neuron to another, a chemical signal has to be released.”

Antonio: “That’s a good start! Bethany, can you think of where that signal originates from?”

Bethany: “I remember it has something to do with the synapse and calcium, but that’s all I can remember.”

Antonio: “That’s a good start Bethany. Why don’t you draw what you know to help.”

\*Bethany draws a very simply model of a synapse\*

Antonio: “Very good Bethany! Now where have we seen calcium previously Mark?”

Mark: \*after thinking for a minute\* “When we talked about secondary messengers in the last unit. I remember he asked a question about it on the last test.”

Antonio: “So why don’t you guys try to come up with a question linking the two concepts like Dr. Simpkins would.”

\*The group starts working on the problem\*

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**Scenario 5: Teaching my friends**

Setting the Scene:

Latia is an LA in Dr. Kroll’s immunology lab. In Dr. Kroll’s immunology lab, students work in groups of 4 to 6 depending on the size of the class. Each week students design their own experiment and then spend the next two weeks testing their approved experimental design. Prior to attending lab, the students have a weekly lab meeting with an LA (meant to emulate a journal club/lab meeting) to help students work though content and develop a basic design that they will test in lab. Latia has a lab section of 20 consisting of 5 groups of 4 that she works with in these lab meetings. Latia is a first semester LA and a bio-premed major. In Latia’s section is her good friend and floormate Shawna. Latia has never been in a position where someone she knew so well was in a class she was assisting. The role-play beings with the students working with their lab groups to come up with an experiment to do in lab this week.

*Dialogue 1:*

Latia: \*walking over to Shawna’s group\* “Hey guys what are you guys thinking about testing in lab this week?”

Shawna: “Hey Latia are you going to go out with us to celebrate John’s birthday tonight?”

Latia: “I was planning on it. I’ve got a few things to do before then, but I should be done in time. Any idea what you guys want to work on this week Shawna?”

Shawna: “I just got this new outfit that I’m excited to wear tonight.” \*excitedly pulls out her phone to show Latia a picture\* “Isn’t this outfit great?”

Latia: “Yes I think you’ll look great. I have a new outfit myself that I could wear. Now about that experimental design.”

Shawna: \*reclining in her chair\* “Latia we have no idea what we are supposed to do, can’t you just help a friend out and give us an experiment? I mean I did help you with your math homework last night. Help a friend out will you?”

Latia: \*says thoughtfully\* “Well based on the background material, what are some variables that you could manipulate?”

Shawna: “Come on Latia, you know we both had that English Lit test yesterday, do you really think I’ve read this? The answer Is no so can you just tell us what to do now?”

Latia: “Yeah that was a really hard test. I didn’t really feel like doing anything after the test either.” \*Latia pauses\* “You guys really have no idea about what to test this week in lab?”

Shawna: \*shakes her head\* “Just give us the answer.”

Latia: “Well there is no one right answer, but I guess I could push you guys in the right direction. So when you think about tumor-associated antigens (antigens being “anti-genes” meaning that they are able to lab specific bag genes for destruction), remember that the without the antigen receptors that the tumor never gets suppressed? You could test for the presence of the antigen receptor with a phosphorescent dye that attaches only to the antigen receptor. That should give you an indication of the presence of the receptor.”

Shawna: \*smiles approvingly\* “That sounds easy enough to do. We will use that experiment for our lab this week. Thanks, Latia you have been a big help.”

*Dialogue 2:*

Latia: \*walking over to Shawna’s group\* “Hey guys what are you guys thinking about testing in lab this week?”

Shawna: “Hey Latia are you going to go out with us to celebrate John’s birthday tonight?”

Latia: “Shawna, while I would love to discuss the birthday party that we are going to celebrate tonight, we are here to help you and your group prepare for lab so let’s focus our efforts on that task.”

Shawna: “Yeah ok, but I got this really cool outfit that I just have to show you.” \*pulls out her phone to show Latia the picture\*

Latia: \*in a calm yet firm tone\* “Shawna please put your phone away, this is time to work on lab stuff. I’ll look at your photos right after class ok?”

Shawna: \*puts her phone away\* “Ok, but you are going to be so jealous!”

Latia: \*smiles at the group\* “So what do you guys want to test today?”

Shawna: “Oh come on Latia, you know we had that hard English Lit test yesterday, we have not read this stuff yet, why don’t you just help us out a little and tell us what to do? Remember how I helped you with your math homework last night?”

Latia: “The goal is for **you** to design a project. So, what do you guys remember from Dr. Kroll’s lecture on tumor-associated antigens?”

Shawna: “I don’t remember can you just tell us?”

Latia: “I bet you do know it! Let’s break it down. What is an antigen?”

Clark: “foreign substance that causes an immune response that usually produces antibodies.”

Latia: “That’s correct. So, what does it mean to be tumor-associated?”

Shawna: “To be commonly found on tumors?”

Latia: “Correct again! Now how could we test to see if they were present in a sample?”

Clark: “We could look up their known sequence online and design a probe that would attach only to that sequence of RNA?”

Latia: “Very good. Now focus your next steps on telling me how you are going to do that. I’ll be back in a few minutes to see how you guys are progressing.”