



**Kids Without Homes:
A School District Responds**

***No Place Like Homelessness*
A Homeless Awareness Lesson**

Grades 3 – 5



Lesson Plan for Teachers

Title: No Place Like Homelessness

Subject: Social Studies

Grade Levels: 3 – 5

Rationale or Purpose:

Students will examine their thoughts and feelings about poverty and homelessness and learn to look beyond stereotypes. They will match ten representative scenarios with the ten most common reasons that people lose their homes. This lesson is intended to acquaint students with the difficulties experienced by people without homes and to elicit an empathetic response.

Why study homeless issues?

It is important to introduce even young students to homeless issues because homelessness is on the rise in Texas and across the nation. The fastest growing segment of over three million people experiencing homelessness in the U. S. is now the single-parent family, which makes up approximately 67% of the homeless population. Like the other 1.2 million homeless children across our nation, 147,000 highly mobile children in Texas experience academic, social, and emotional difficulties that are worsened when classmates ridicule and ostracize them.

In addition, a thoughtful study of poverty and homelessness:

- identifies stereotypes and dispels myths about people without homes;
- encourages awareness of the economically disadvantaged in our society;
- invites students to commit themselves to community service projects;
- prepares students to address important societal issues and problems, so that they can become caring, informed, proactive citizens.

Materials:

- *My Home* – an activity where students specify things they appreciate about their own homes and imagine how they would feel if they lost their homes
- *My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This* – an activity where students examine their thoughts and feelings about poverty homes and learn how stereotypes affect perceptions
- *Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?* – an activity where students learn the ten most common reasons that people lose their homes and write short scenarios illustrating the reasons

- ***End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5*** – a fact sheet for kids from the National Alliance to End Homelessness
- ***Certificates of Appreciation*** – a document to acknowledge what students have learned and to bring closure to the lesson

Lesson Duration for 5 Activities: 4 classroom hours

Objectives: Social Studies

Co-Curricular Connections/TEKS: Social Studies

Source: Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies – Subchapter A. Elementary School
www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/ch113a.html

§113.5(b). Social Studies, Grade 3 – Knowledge & skills.

(6)(B) ***Economics***. The student understands the purposes of spending and saving money. The student is expected to analyze a simple budget that allocates money for spending and saving.

(7)(A) ***Economics***. The student understands the concept of an economic system. The student is expected to define and identify examples of scarcity ...

(11) ***Citizenship***. The student understands the impact of individual and group decisions on communities in a democratic society. The student is expected to:

(B) identify examples of actions individuals and groups can take to improve the community; and

(C) identify examples of nonprofit and/or civic organizations such as the Red Cross and explain how they serve the common good.

(18)(A) ***Social studies skills***. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

§113.6(b). Social Studies, Grade 4 – Knowledge & skills.

(22)(E) ***Social studies skills***. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced the participants in an event.

(24)(A) ***Social studies skills***. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

§113.7(b). Social Studies, Grade 5 – Knowledge & skills.

(25)(B) *Social studies skills.* The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

(26) *Social studies skills.* The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

(B) incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication;

(C) express ideas orally based on research and experiences;

(27)(A) *Social studies skills.* The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

Activity #1:

Step 1: Teacher distributes *My Home* activity page.

Step 2: Teacher instructs students to complete each phrase in the diagram and answer the five “If I were homeless” questions that follow.

Step 3: Teacher asks for volunteers to share their answers.

Step 4: Teacher encourages class to see how easily we take for granted the comforts and safety of our homes.

Activity #2:

Step 1: Teacher distributes *My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This* activity pages, making sure that each student has only one image to respond to.

Step 2: Teacher instructs students to respond to the image by answering the questions honestly and reassures them that they will not have to share their answers with anyone.

Step 3: Teacher begins class discussion by directing students’ attention to question 10. Teacher helps students define “stereotype” and encourages an in-depth, non-judgmental discussion about where stereotypes come from. Teacher points out that stereotypes, especially among young people, are often the result of little or no accurate information.

Activity #3:

Step 1: Teacher distributes *Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?* activity pages.

Step 2: Teacher begins activity by assisting students, as needed, in matching three short scenarios with three of the ten reasons that people lose their homes.

Step 3: Teacher divides the class into seven teams, assigns a different remaining reason to each team and asks them to write a short story about that reason.

Step 4: At completion of the written activity, teacher asks teams to share their stories.

Activity #4:

- Step 1: Teacher distributes *Choose It or Lose It* activity page.
- Step 2: Students complete the *Choose It or Lose It* activity page.
- Step 3: Teacher asks students what they would take and what would be hard to leave behind if they had 15 minutes to put their only possessions in a backpack.

Activity #5:

- Step 1: Teacher distributes homework assignment, *End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5* (with optional writing exercises).
- Step 2: Students complete assignment.
- Step 3: Class discusses option of visiting a homeless shelter or undertaking a class service project.
- Step 4: If class elects a follow-up activity, teacher guides students in writing a proposal to obtain approval from administration and parents.
- Step 5: At conclusion of lesson or class project, teacher distributes *Certificates of Appreciation*.

Long Term Activity:

Optional class visit to a homeless shelter and/or a class service project, requiring approval of School Administration and parents and collaboration with a service provider

Final Activity:

Distribute *Certificates of Appreciation*.

Modification:

Teacher may ask students to complete two activities as part of their homework reading of *End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5*.

Student Product:

A basic understanding of how people lose their homes and an empathetic response to difficulties associated with homelessness

Closure:

Teacher distributes *Certificates of Appreciation* to students in recognition of their participation in activities to understand and ease the difficulties experienced by people in homeless situations.

Assessment or Evaluation:

Were students able to relate to the difficulties of people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness? Were students who initially responded with stereotypical thinking able to move beyond stereotyping people experiencing poverty and homelessness?

Extension:

Optional: Class visit to a homeless shelter and/or a class service project

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- The University of Texas at Austin, Charles A. Dana Center, Texas Homeless Education Office

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Lesson plan format adapted from examples on The University of Texas' *Utopia for Teachers* at <http://utopia.utexas.edu/educators/index.html>

Activity #1: *My House* diagram adapted from *Without a Home (A Curriculum Guide)*, Maine Department of Education, Office of Homeless Education, October 1992, page 9

Discussion questions adapted from *K-12 Curriculum: Homeless Children, Youth and Families: A Teaching Guide*, Robert Mann, Common Cents Seattle, 1994, page 3

Activity #2: *My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This* adapted from *Homelessness: A Teacher's Resource Packet I*, by Marlene F. Brands and Debra A. DeBates, 1992, page 28

Photo sources:

A Humble Home - www.photo.net/photo/pcd0728/gray-and-red-shack-25

A Makeshift Dwelling - www.deborahhage.com/peru/springtravelletter.htm

Crowded & Cramped! - www.warec.org.uk/hfnfd99.html

Activity #4: *Choose It or Lose It* adapted from the “**What Would You Take?**” activity in *What’s It Like to be Homeless? An Educational Curriculum Guide for Children and Youth*, Bridge Communications, Glen Ellyn, IL, 2004

Activity #5: *End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5* from The National Alliance to End Homelessness at www.endhomelessness.org/pub/factsheets/Us3-5.pdf

Optional Long Term Activity – *Shelter Visit Checklist for Teachers* adapted from *Without a Home (A Curriculum Guide)*, Maine Department of Education, Office of Homeless Education, October 1992, page 8

Special Note for Teachers

Kids Without Homes, a curriculum developed specifically for Texas school district personnel, includes a module especially for teachers. Materials, including a PowerPoint presentation, are available at www.utdanacenter.org/theo/toolkits.html#kidswithouthomes.

Activity #1
My Home

Teacher Notes

My Home

Teacher Notes

Activity Time	Written Activity: 15 minutes Discussion: 30 minutes
Activity Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To help student understand the benefits of having a home, benefits that are easily taken for granted• To raise awareness of how difficult it is not to have a home and to encourage empathy for people living in impoverished and/or homeless situations
Activity Handout	<i>My Home</i>
Activity Synopsis	Student Activity: Students complete phrases that invite them to appreciate the benefits of having a home and consider how they might feel if they lost it. Class Discussion: Class shares answers to questions with focus on how hard it is to go without things that are easily taken for granted.

Guidelines

1. Distribute *My Home* activity page.
2. Tell students they have 15 minutes to complete all the phrases on the page.
3. After students complete the writing activity, ask volunteers to share how they completed the five phrases in the house diagram.
4. Emphasize the benefits of having a home, pointing out how easy it is to take for granted the comfort and safety of home, immediate access to food, bathrooms, televisions, our own beds, etc.
5. Raise awareness about and empathy for people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness by asking students how they completed the following phrases:
 - If I didn't have a home, I would feel ...
 - If I didn't have a home, I would not be able to ...
 - If I didn't have a home, I would play with my friends at ...
 - If I didn't have a home, I would stay ...
 - If I didn't have a home, I would eat dinner at ...

Next Activity	My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This
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Activity #2
My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This

Teacher Notes

My Thoughts and Feelings About A Home Like This

Teacher Notes

Activity Time	Written Activity: 20 minutes Discussion: 25 minutes
Activity Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To give students an opportunity to explore their thoughts, feelings and attitudes about poverty homes• To help students understand how easy it is to apply stereotypical thinking to people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness
Activity Handout	<i>My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This</i>
Activity Synopsis	Student Activity: Student responds to an image of a poverty home. Class Discussion: Class learns about stereotypes and sees how easy it is to respond in a stereotypical way to poverty homes and the people who live in them.

Guidelines

A Note About Student Activity Materials: This activity includes one set of questions and three images:

- A Humble Home
- A Makeshift Dwelling
- Crowded & Cramped

The questions about all three images are the same. In preparing copies of this activity for your students, you may want to use only one image, so that everyone in the class is seeing the same picture. Or, to add variety, you may want to use two or three images.

1. Distribute *My Thoughts and Feelings About a Home Like This*, making sure that each student has only one image to respond to.
2. Advise students that they have 20 minutes to respond to the image by completing the questions that follow. Encourage them to answer as honestly as they can and reassure them that they will not have to share their answers with anyone.
3. Begin class discussion by directing students' attention to question 10.
4. Help students define "stereotype" using the following definition:

Stereotype: a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment

5. Ask class if they think our society tends to stereotype people who are in homeless or poverty situations.

Note: The content and tone of the discussion should be open, non-judgmental, and exploratory. **Students should not be made to feel ignorant or guilty about their answers to the first nine questions.**

6. Encourage an in-depth, non-judgmental discussion about where stereotypes come from. Emphasize that stereotypes, especially among young people, are often the result of little or no accurate information.

Next Activity	Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?
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Activity #3
Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?

Teacher Notes

Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?

Teacher Notes

Activity Time	Written Activity: 20 minutes Discussion: 45 minutes
Activity Objective	To encourage students to feel empathy for persons who are experiencing poverty and/or homelessness by having them make up realistic scenarios about people at risk for losing their homes
Activity Handout	<i>Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?</i>
Activity Synopsis	Student Activity: Students use list of common reasons that people lose their homes to write short scenarios illustrating each reason. Class Discussion: Class shares their scenarios.

Guidelines

1. Distribute *Why Do Some People Lose Their Homes?* activity pages.
2. Read out loud the ten reasons that many people lose their homes.
3. Read the first scenario and help class to match it to the most appropriate reason.
4. Read the second scenario and ask class for the correct corresponding reason.
5. Divide the class into seven teams.
6. Ask teams to read the third scenario and select another reason from the list. (Remind them that no reason will be used more than once.)
7. Ask teams what reason they chose.
8. Assign one of the seven remaining reasons to the seven teams. Ask each team to write a short story that illustrates the reason that was assigned to them.
9. At completion of team activity, ask the teams to read their reason and share with the class the story they wrote.

Answers Key

Story 1 – Correct answer: Reason #2. The person whose income supports the family loses a job.

Emphasize that students need only write a few key words rather than writing out the whole reason.

Example of key words: lost job

Story 2 – Correct answer: Reason #5. The family's income doesn't keep up with basic cost-of-living expenses.

Example of key words: not enough money to pay higher expenses

Story 3 – Correct answer: Reason #8. The family has no health coverage or hospitalization plan to cover bills when one of them has surgery, a major injury, or a serious illness.

Example of key words: no health/medical/hospital insurance.

Remaining scenarios created by students

- Read a reason from the list below and ask for corresponding stories.
 - Make sure the stories provide realistic examples that demonstrate understanding of the matching reason.
1. The family has no insurance to cover major damage to their home due to a fire or a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, a tornado, an earthquake, or a flood.
Example of key words: No house insurance
 2. The person who supports the family has a job that requires a car. The car is necessary not only to get to and from work but also to go from place to place during the day. The car breaks down and the family can't afford to fix it or buy another one. The person has to quit that job and look for a job that doesn't require a car.
Example of key words: Car broke down
 3. A full-time job on which the family depends to make ends meet becomes a part-time job.
Example of key words: Job only part-time
 4. The family gets behind on monthly payments (such as rent, utilities, loans, credit cards), so that it's not possible to make all the minimum payments.
Example of key words: Behind on payments
 5. The family has an unplanned major expense, such as a trip because of a family emergency.
Example of key words: Major expense
 6. A family member spends all the money on an addiction to alcohol or drugs.
Example of key words: Money spent on alcohol or drugs
 7. The family has to pay for long-term care for a family member or close relative.
Example of key words: Long-term expense

Before leaving this activity, reinforce the fact that, contrary to some stereotypes, many people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness are employed. Often, if they are unskilled, they hold down two or more jobs in an effort to make ends meet.

Next Activity	Choose It or Lose It
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Activity #4
Choose It or Lose It

Teacher Notes

Choose It or Lose It

Teacher Notes

Activity Time	Written Activity: 15 minutes Discussion: 15 minutes
Activity Objective	To encourage students to feel empathy for persons who are experiencing poverty and/or homelessness
Activity Handout	<i>Choose It or Lose It</i>
Activity Synopsis	Student Activity: Student imagines that he or she has 15 minutes to fill a backpack with the only things he or she can take when given 15 minutes to vacate home. Class Discussion: Class shares answers to questions with focus on how hard it is to give up—or not have—things that are easily taken for granted

Guidelines

1. Distribute *Choose It or Loose It* activity page.
2. Allow students 15 minutes to complete the activity, using the following scenario:

Imagine: You and your family were just told you that you have 15 minutes to vacate your home.

You can take only whatever you can fit into a backpack.

What things would you take with you?

What things would be hard to leave behind?

3. Begin the class discussion by asking students to tell the class what they would put in their backpacks.
4. When an item is mentioned, ask other students to hold up their hands if the same or a similar item was on their list. Spend no more than 10 minutes on this part of the discussion.
5. Ask students to tell the class what they found hard to leave behind. Spend 20 minutes on this part of the discussion, which should focus on how hard it is to give up—or not have—things that are easily taken for granted.

Next Activity	End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5
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Activity #5
End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5

Teacher Notes

End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5

Teacher Notes

Activity Time	Homework: No more than 45 minutes (even with selected optional activity); varies with student's reading skills and level of interest Discussion: 30-45 minutes, depending on whether two optional activities were assigned and level of student interest in a follow-up project.
Activity Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide students with additional information about homeless issues• To introduce the possibility of follow-up activities, such as visiting a homeless shelter, initiating a class project to assist people experiencing homelessness, writing legislators about homeless issues, etc.
Activity Handouts	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Kids in Grades 3-5</i>2. <i>Certificate of Appreciation</i>
Activity Synopsis	Student Activity: Reading homework and answering optional questions in <i>End Homelessness!</i> fact sheet Class Activity: Discussion of facts – new and familiar; possibility of follow-up activities

Guidelines

1. Prepare *Certificates of Appreciation*.
2. Distribute *End Homelessness!* fact sheet for homework assignment.
3. **Optional:**
 - As part of their homework assignment, ask students to complete two activities on page 3 of the Fact Sheet:
 - *Find It!* Activity:

To minimize frustration, remind students that letters in one word can overlap with letters in another word and that words can be spelled right to left as well as diagonally.
 - *Calculate It!* Activity – No special instructions needed.
 - In follow-up discussion, ask students to show their *Find It!* words to the class and to give their answers to the *Calculate It!* activity.
 - In follow-up discussion, use the **Answer Key** on page 3 in these Teacher Notes to check student's answers.

4. In follow-up discussion, ask students to give examples of Fact Sheet information that was new to them and information that was familiar because of what they had learned in class.
5. Use answers on the next page to go over optional homework questions.
6. If class would like to undertake a follow-up activity – such as visiting a homeless shelter or sponsoring a food or clothing drive – administrative and parental approvals will probably be needed.
 - Refer to the checklist on page 4 as an example of key factors you need to keep in mind
 - Guide the class in writing up a proposal.

Final Activity	Distribute <i>Certificates of Appreciation</i> at completion of lesson or, if class undertakes a follow-up activity, at the end of that activity
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Answer Key for Optional Questions on page 3 of the Fact Sheet

Activity: Find It!

DOMINOS
FAMILY
FURNISHINGS
GOVERNMENT

HELP
HOME
HOPES

HOUSIN2000
JOB
RENT

SHELTER
SOLUTIONS
VOLUNTEER

W	E	H	G	Y	E	L	T	R	K	D	O	M	I	N	H	D	S
H	A	S	O	L	U	T	I	O	N	S	C	O	W	N	O	O	V
J	E	G	V	O	M	N	O	C	H	S	H	O	Y	E	M	M	L
E	L	N	E	U	O	H	H	E	C	L	H	G	R	L	E	I	S
S	H	I	R	R	D	V	O	L	U	N	T	E	E	R	X	N	F
O	L	H	N	A	R	A	P	W	H	A	Y	B	L	H	J	O	S
L	E	S	M	I	G	R	E	D	D	Y	E	L	I	T	L	S	A
U	R	I	E	B	O	J	S	H	E	L	W	B	I	V	E	S	H
T	D	N	N	C	I	V	O	L	U	I	T	E	H	M	U	R	T
R	E	R	T	M	X	R	E	N	T	O	P	H	E	L	A	P	G
K	M	U	A	U	R	F	A	N	R	S	A	N	L	Z	H	F	A
U	P	F	H	O	U	S	I	N	2	0	0	0	P	E	R	O	M

Activity: Calculate It!

It costs a family about \$900 a month for a typical two-bedroom apartment in Washington, D.C. How much will it cost to rent the apartment for one year?

Answer: \$10,800

Calculation: \$900 X 12 months








How much will it cost to rent the apartment each week?

Answer: \$208 or \$209

Method: Annual rent divided by 52 weeks = **\$208.00** (rounded up)

Method: Monthly rent divided by 4.3 weeks in a month = **\$209.00** (rounded down)

Class Service Projects in Homeless Shelters: A Checklist for Teachers

-  1. Be certain of the class' ability to fulfill any commitments they make.
-  2. Be aware that such activities must be approved by and coordinated with school administration. Transportation should be arranged well in advance.
-  3. Be sure that you and /or an administrator visit the shelter before taking students. This is important because shelters are often chaotic. Typically, the residents are in a state of transition, turmoil, and even crisis.
-  4. Obtain permission of parent or guardian for any trip to a shelter. (Consider having a meeting with the parents/guardians to have the students explain their project.)
-  5. Ask a shelter staff person to serve as your contact and guide when you visit.
-  6. Learn about the shelter and share this information with your class before the visit.
 - On an average, how many people does it serve?
 - Does it serve families?
 - If so, how many children are preschoolers? Who looks after them when the parents aren't there?
 - Is there a limit to how long a family can stay?
 - What is the average length of a family's stay?
 - What are the rules for people staying there?
 - Is there a schedule?
 - Are meals served? When? Foods typically served at each meal?
 - Is there a story-telling program? A tutoring program?
 - What would be the best time for the class to visit? How long should they expect to stay?
 - (Ask additional questions submitted by your students.)
-  7. Ask what is needed or in greatest demand, especially by families with children.

Modified checklist from *Without a Home*, Maine Department of Education, 1992