

Musical Chairs

Grade Level: 2nd-5th

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:

- Two rows of chairs placed back-to-back, one less than the number of participants
- CD player with music CD's
- Copies of the following scenarios cut into individual slips.

Instructions: While music is playing have students walk around the chairs. When the music stops, have students find a chair on which to sit. The student left standing is the 'person experiencing homelessness.' Have that student choose a scenario and read it to the rest of the group. Repeat until all the scenarios have been given out.

#1 I am a single mother with 4 children ages 2, 6, 8 and 10. Landlords tell me they will not rent to families with more than 3 children. My uncle lets us sleep on the floor in his apartment. The local school won't enroll my children because they say we are not residents in that school district.

#2 I am a single mother with a daughter who is 8 years old. I work in a laundromat making \$7.80 per hour. I cannot afford the rent for an apartment so the owner lets us sleep in the laundromat at night.

#3 I am 12 years old. My dad hurt his back last year and can't find a job. We have lots of medical bills. My mom works but doesn't earn enough for us to have our own apartment. We were evicted from our last apartment because we couldn't pay the rent.

#4 My husband walked out on me and my three children. John is 4, Jennifer is 2 and the baby is 6 months old. The landlord evicted us. I need to find a job, but I can't find child care for my kids so I can go out and look for one. We live in our car, but I don't have any money for gas. I want to work, but it all seems too overwhelming.

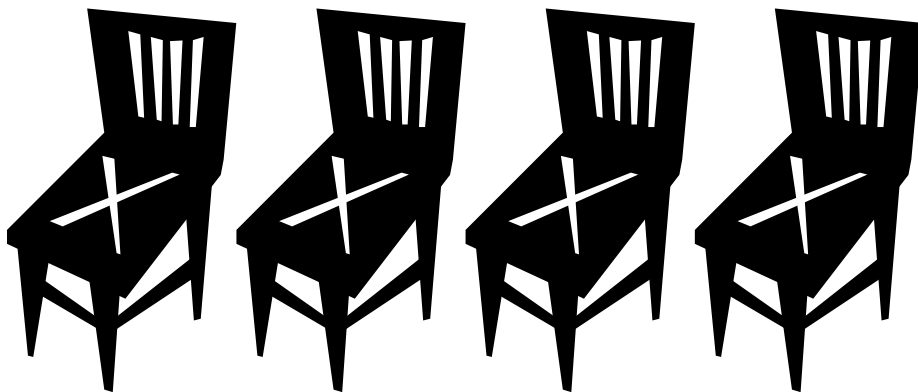
#5 I'm 7. My mom, my sister, and I live in our car. It's pretty crowded in there with all our clothes and everything. We have to find a different place every time we need to use the bathroom. I'm in school now, but I hope my friends don't find

out that I live in our car. My best friend Matt wants to know if he can come over to play at my house. What am I supposed to tell him?

#6 I'm in eighth grade. We've moved so many times, I've gone to ten different schools. I'm not a very good reader, and I have a lot of trouble understanding math. I get mad a lot at school, and I'm always in trouble. You'd be mad, too, if you didn't get to stay in one place long enough to make friends. I just wish we could have a house with a backyard where I could play. Then maybe I could catch up at school and have my friends over.

Discussion:

- Have the group process their thoughts and feelings about the situations they heard.
- Talk about ways the people in each scenario could find help.
- Discuss ways the students could help people in similar situations.



From activity "Musical Chairs" from What's it Like to Be Homeless? An Educational Curriculum for Children and Youth Presented by Bridge Communities. Accessed through: www.bridgecommunities.org (2006).

What Would You Take?

Grade: 3rd-5th

Time: 30 minutes

Scenario: You have just gotten word that you and your family are being evicted. You have only been given a few days notice. Your family doesn't have enough money saved for a deposit on a new place and you find yourselves with no alternative but to become homeless. Your mother has told you to gather all your belongings that you can carry in your backpack.

On a separate sheet of paper answer the following questions and discuss answers as a class.

1. What would be the first thing that you take?
2. Why did you choose this item?
3. Make a list of the belongings that you would take
4. What things did you have to leave behind?
5. Did you bring your pets?
6. What will you miss most about having a home?
7. What are some feelings that you can imagine having in this situation?



Photographer: Jeremy Johnson

Adapted from activity "What Would You Take" from What's it Like to Be Homeless? An Educational Curriculum for Children and Youth Presented by Bridge Communities. Accessed through: www.bridgecommunities.org (2006).

Calculate It!

Grades: 4th-12th

Time: 15-30 minutes

It costs a family about \$737 rent per month for an average 2-bedroom apartment in Multnomah County, Oregon (Portland, OR).

Family #1	Family #2
\$ The minimum wage in Oregon is \$7.80 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?	\$ Suppose you have a better paying job and make \$14 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?
\$ How much will you earn in a month?	\$ How much will you earn in a month?
\$ How much will you have left over after you pay your rent? Think about if this amount will be enough to pay for food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.	\$ How much will you have left over after you pay your rent? Think about if this amount will be enough to pay for food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.
\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.	\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.

Adapted from activity "Calculate It!" from What's it Like to Be Homeless? An Educational Curriculum for Children and Youth Presented by Bridge Communities. Accessed through: www.bridgecommunities.org (2006). Fair Market Rent (FMR) numbers obtained from the Danter Company, accessed through: <http://www.danter.com/TAXCREDIT/fmr.htm>.

Calculate It! Answers

It costs a family about \$737 rent per month for an average 2-bedroom apartment in Multnomah County, Oregon (Portland, OR).

Family #1	Family #2
<p>\$ The minimum wage in Oregon is \$7.80 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$7.80/hr * 40hrs = \$312/week</p>	<p>\$ Suppose you have a better paying job and make \$14 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$14/hr * 40hrs = \$560/week</p>
<p>\$ How much will you earn in a month?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$312/wk * 4 wks = \$1,248/mth</p>	<p>\$ How much will you earn in a month?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$560/wk * 4 wks = \$2,240/mth</p>
<p>\$ How much will you have left over after you pay your rent? Think about if this amount will be enough to pay for food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1,248 - 737 = \$511 left</p>	<p>\$ How much will you have left over after you pay your rent? Think about if this amount will be enough to pay for food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$2,240 - 737 = \$1503 left</p>
<p>\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - move in with relatives or friends; - share our apartment with others who are also working to share living costs; - move into a shelter - get a second job; 	<p>\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.</p> <p>Using possible answers in the left column, discuss other possibilities, i.e.: what bills won't be paid; what will happen if you need to go to the doctor; how will you pay school fees; etc.</p> <p>How would your expenses and options for housing change if you had more than one child?</p>

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Shelter Life

Grades 4th-8th

Time: 1 hour

Discussion:

Many families who are experiencing homelessness live in shelters. A shelter can be a room in a building (a church, school, or other type of building). There are some shelters that offer services like information and referral, job training, transitional housing and emergency assistance. Despite that, it can often be a scary place for families, especially young children.

Many shelters can be noisy, too hot or too cold, crowded or lack many comforts. Sometimes people sleep in the same room with people they don't know. Bathrooms are shared among the people sharing the space. There are times when some shelters don't allow families to stay together; the women and children are housed separately from their male partners. This can be very difficult if a family is trying to remain together. Some families are forced to live in cars, at campgrounds, or doubled up with their friends or relatives.

In many cities, including Portland, there are not enough shelter beds for everyone who needs shelter. Many people are turned away when the shelters are full because there is not enough space for them. Shelters are usually designed to provide only a few weeks of emergency housing, so people sometimes have to go back out on the streets when the time limit is up at the shelter.

Activity: Give students paper and markers or colored pencils. Have students draw a picture of their own bedroom. After they complete the drawings, use the above discussion points and the following questions to get students thinking about how life would be different if they lived in a shelter.

1. Do you share a room? Explain that people often share rooms with people they don't even know in shelters.
2. What are some of your favorite things about your room? Do you like that it is your own space? Explain how people do not have much privacy in shelters.
3. Do you have lots of stuff in your room? Explain how people would not have enough room for all of their belongings in a shelter.
4. Do you have a pet? Explain that many shelters do not allow pets.
5. What do you do at home when you want a snack? Explain that in a shelter, people often do not cook their own meals.

Adapted from "What's it Like to Be Homeless? An Educational Curriculum for Children and Youth Presented by Bridge Communities. Accessed through: www.bridgecommunities.org (2006).

Solutions to Homelessness

Grade: 4th-12th

Time: 1 hour



Photographer: Alan Shipley

Activity:

Have students break into groups of 3 to 5, depending on the size of your class. Ask students to brainstorm some ideas or ways to end poverty and homelessness. Keep in mind the work you have done in some of the other activities in this curriculum around why people are homeless and how it feels to be homeless. Once students are done, have them get back together in the larger group and share their ideas with one another. Offer the following solutions below after students share and see if the students' solutions match any of these.

- **Build more affordable housing.** Many people do not have housing because they cannot afford rent, even if they are working. All people have a right to housing. There needs to be more housing that people can actually pay for and still be able to pay for other basic necessities like food, toiletries, clothing, etc.
- **Provide more livable wage jobs.** Many people work but if they are paid a minimum wage, they do not always have enough money to pay for rent, utilities, food, medical insurance, etc. A livable wage job allows people to take better care of themselves because they have to make fewer choices between which of their needs to meet.
- **Provide universal health care.** When people are sick and need medical attention, they should be able to see a doctor. If people do not have insurance, they cannot always access the care they need. When people without insurance do go to the hospital, they end up having large bills to pay. This makes it difficult for people to then pay for other needs they have because they are already in debt. This should not happen because all people have a right to healthcare.
- **Provide more services.** There are not enough of the services that people need. People who experience homelessness should be asked about what types of services they need and how they want them run. They should be included in the process so that services are participatory.
- **Ask people who have been homeless.** People who have been and are currently homeless have lots of solutions. Ask them what they think we need to do to end homelessness!
- **Get involved.** For more ideas on how to get involved, check out the activity entitled "What Can I Do?" 😊

What Can I Do?

Activities for all ages

Volunteer:

There are many places in our community that work with people experiencing homelessness. Your time and compassion can help our community in working towards ending poverty and homelessness.

*Before volunteering, please call the following organizations to inquire about current volunteer opportunities and volunteer requirements.

P:EAR

809 SW Alder
Portland, OR 97205
503-228-6677

<http://www.pearmentor.org>

Blanchet House

340 NW Glisan St
Portland, OR 97209
503-226-3911

<http://blanchethouse.org>

Sisters Of The Road

133 NW Sixth Ave
Portland, OR 97209
503-222-5694 ext. 10

www.sistersoftheroad.org

Dignity Village

9325 NE Sunderland Rd
Portland, OR 97211
503-281-1604

JOIN

3338 Se 17th Ave
Portland, OR 97202
503-232-2031

www.joinpdx.com

Northwest Pilot Project

1430 SW Broadway, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97201
503-227-5605

www.nwpilotproject.org

Portland Rescue Mission

111 West Burnside
Portland, OR 97209
503-227-0421

www.portlandrescuemission.org

Street Roots

211 NW Davis
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-5657

www.streetroots.org

* These are only a few ideas of places to volunteer. Check out other resources such as the PATHway Project's "What You Can Do" tool kit for more ideas. Link can be found on Sisters' website on the curriculum page.

What Can I Do?

Activities for all ages

Donate:

People experiencing homelessness often left many of their belongings when they became homeless. Donating to programs that work with people experiencing homelessness is a way that you can help people meet their needs. Warm clothing and blankets are especially needed during the winter months.

*Before donating, please call the following organizations to inquire about current donations needs.

Street Roots - Donate hats, gloves, Tri-Met bus tickets

211 NW Davis
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-5657
www.streetroots.org

Oregon Food Bank - Food

7900 NE 33rd Drive
Portland, OR
503-282-0555
www.oregonfoodbank.org

JOIN - Donate blankets, socks, hygiene items

3338 SE 17th Ave
Portland, OR 97202
503-232-2031
www.joinpdx.com

Outreach Ministries - Donate clothing, food

203 NW Third
Portland, OR 97209
503-225-0590

Oregon Community Warehouse – Donate kitchenware, household items, furniture

2267 N Interstate Ave
Portland, OR 97227
503-235-8786
www.oregoncommunitywarehouse.org

* These are only a few ideas of places to donate. Check out other resources such as the PATHway Project's "What You Can Do" tool kit for more ideas. Link can be found on Sisters' website on the curriculum page.

What Can I Do?

Activities for all ages

Organize a hygiene drive:

People experiencing homelessness are often in need of hygiene supplies. You and your class could organize a hygiene drive collecting soap, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, deodorant, toothbrushes, and diapers.

*Before organizing, please call the following organizations to inquire about current donations needs.

Transition Projects, Inc.

475 NW Glisan St.
Portland, OR 97209
503-823-4930

www.tprojects.org

Sisters Of The Road

133 NW Sixth
Portland, OR 97209
503-222-5694 ext. 10

www.sistersoftheroad.org

Downtown Chapel

601 W Burnside
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-0746

www.downtownchapel.org

New Avenues for Youth

1220 SW Columbia
Portland, OR 97201
503-224-4339

www.newavenues.org



Photographer: Patrick Nolen

What Can I Do?

Activities for all ages

Contact Elected Officials:

A way that you can let policy makers know that you are concerned about people who are experiencing homelessness or living in poverty is through letter writing, email, or phone call. Here are some ideas of what you could include in a letter or email or say during a phone call:

- Ask your local and national elected officials to be a part of the solution
- Ask that they re-establish affordable housing to levels that address the real need
- Ask that they prioritize basic human rights like housing and healthcare

Contact your city officials:

Mayor Tom Potter:

Email: mayorpotter@ci.portland.or.us

Address: 1221 SW 4th Ave, Suite 340 Portland OR, 97204

Phone: 503-823-4120

Commissioner Randy Leonard:

Email: randy@ci.portland.or.us

Address: 1221 SW 4th Ave., Room 210 Portland OR, 97204

Phone: 503-823-4682

Commissioner Erik Sten:

Email: erik@ci.portland.or.us

Address: 1221 SW 4th Ave., Rm. 240, Portland, OR 97204-1998

Phone: 503-823-3589

Commissioner Sam Adams:

Email: commissionersam@ci.portland.or.us

Address: 1221 SW Fourth Avenue, Room 220 Portland, OR 97204

Phone: 503-823-3008

Commissioner Dan Saltzman:

Email: dsaltzman@ci.portland.or.us

1221 SW 4th Ave., Room 230, Portland OR, 97204

Phone: 503-823-4151

Search the web for contact info for other key people to contact such as the Governor and Oregon Representatives.

What Can I Do?

Activities for all ages

Educate and Speak out!

Continue to educate yourself and others about poverty and homelessness. Educate those around you about the root causes of homelessness and speak out against stereotypes. By doing this you will be standing up for the rights of all your neighbors.

Here are a couple opportunities to educate yourself and others more:

- Read the Western Regional Advocacy Project's report *Without Housing: Decades of Federal Housing Cutbacks, Massive Homelessness, and Policy Failures* which documents over 25 years of cuts to federal affordable housing programs. *Without Housing* explains in plain language the root causes of contemporary homelessness and the changes in policy priorities necessary to house families, seniors, people with disabilities and others who are experiencing homelessness. People who are without housing, need homes! Read the report and encourage your family and friends to read the report.
- Read Street Roots, Portland's street newspaper. Encourage your family and friends to buy a paper from a vendor today and read it for up to date information on current issues surrounding housing and homelessness. Be sure to check out the Act Now section for more ideas on how you can take action!
- Read Sisters' book *Voices From the Street: Truths about Homelessness from Sisters Of The Road* which tells about homelessness from the voices of people with the experience. Encourage your family and friends to read the book too!
- Join the Portland struggle for affordable housing. Check out Affordable Housing NOW! at www.cdnportland.org/ahn.html
- Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers.
- Think "outside the box" and develop creative ideas. Talk with people with the experience of homelessness about their creative ideas too. We will not end homelessness overnight and we need lots of ideas about how to work together on solutions and how to build community based in nonviolence and compassion.