



## Teacher Toolkit

*A resource package designed to assist educators in teaching students about homelessness in Waterloo Region*



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**This Toolkit is available online at:  
[www.hhug.ca](http://www.hhug.ca)**

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*We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.*

—Marian Wright Edelman

## Introductory Note

In the Region of Waterloo planning document, *All Roads Lead to Home: A Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region*, Ken Seiling, Regional Chair, stated:

*There is a role for everyone to play in ending homelessness – all orders of government, community groups, the private sector and ordinary citizens. Together we can ensure that everyone in Waterloo Region has a place to call home.*

Thank you for playing your role in ending homelessness through teaching your students about this important societal issue. Education is an essential component in creating an inclusive community where no one experiences homelessness.

The Teacher Toolkit (the Toolkit) was created by the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG). The HHUG is a non-partisan group consisting of concerned individuals, including individuals with lived experience, agencies and groups committed to preventing and reducing homelessness in Waterloo Region ([www.hhug.ca](http://www.hhug.ca)).

This resource was designed to provide you with the tools and information necessary to teach children about local and broad issues of homelessness in an age-appropriate manner. The information and materials in this guide are designed for elementary students – Grades K-8 – but elements can be adapted for older students as well.

The lesson plans are designed to be thorough and detailed, so that they are easily adaptable for any classroom environment. We suggest that teachers begin any lesson associated with homelessness by leading a discussion with students about what they already know about homelessness. As a tool for discussion, teachers can use *The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet* (p.6) as a starting point. An “answer key” is provided to assist teachers in addressing misconceptions about people who have no home.

In addition, Home Free, created by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario provides excellent supplementary lesson plan ideas ([www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/](http://www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/) → search “Home Free”).

Thank you again for working to end homelessness through educating students. We hope that this resource will be a valuable tool for you.



## Acknowledgements

The Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG) would like to thank the members of the School-Based Sub-Committee including Sharon Froehlich, Heather Papp, Julie Hornick-Martyk, Charles Nichols, Mary Olajide, Bethany Wagler-Mantle, and Lindsey White. These individuals provided the passion, skills, and time necessary to complete the toolkit. Heather Papp and Bethany Wagler-Mantle authored the Toolkit.

The HHUG would also like to thank both the Waterloo Region District School Board and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board for their support and input in the development and distribution of this resource.

Finally, the HHUG would like to thank you, teachers, for educating your students about this important issue in our community.



*I am glad that I have somewhere to go so that my mom doesn't worry about me. She has to worry about finding us a place to live.*  
—15 year old staying at Safe Haven Shelter (Kitchener) after family was evicted

## What is Homelessness and Why is it Worth Talking About?

### ❖ What is homelessness?

There is no universal agreement on the definition of homelessness because it is not easily defined. The HHUG defines homelessness as:

- People are **at-risk of homelessness** when their housing is unaffordable, unsafe, overcrowded, insecure, inappropriate, or poorly maintained, and when they lack the support necessary to maintain stability in their lives.
- People experience **hidden homelessness** when they are living in temporary accommodations such as with family or friends.
- People experience **absolute homelessness** when they are staying in emergency shelters or sleeping in places not intended for livings (i.e., in cars, on streets, under bridges).

### ❖ Why do people experience homelessness?

Poverty is one of the main causes of homelessness. People who are without adequate housing, income and support are more likely to fall into homelessness. They do not have resources that help them to maintain stability in their lives following a catastrophic event like a car accident, illness or loss of employment (also known as “trigger events”). For others, it may not be so much a “trigger event” as a “tipping point”, when the slow build up of increasing debt, arrears and/or personal issues reaches a breaking point. People can avoid losing their housing by ensuring that where they live is affordable and by staying connected to the support they need to maintain stability in their lives.

### ❖ Who experiences homelessness in the Waterloo Region?

People of all ages, genders, and backgrounds experience homelessness in Waterloo Region. In 2008, there were 2,783 people who accessed emergency shelters in Waterloo Region. This is not a full count of absolute homelessness because it does not include people sleeping in places not intended for living or people experiencing hidden homelessness. In Canada, at least 150,000 to 300,000 people are living in shelters or on the streets (Homelessness Partnering Strategy, 2009).

### ❖ What is the impact of experiencing homelessness on adults and children?

Homelessness severely reduces an individual's quality of life. Studies have shown that people experiencing homelessness are more likely to die younger and have significantly poorer physical and mental health than their housed counterparts. The experience of homelessness for children also has many negative consequences including: poor health and nutrition; poor hygiene; low self-esteem; unwillingness to form relationships with peers; difficulty trusting people; short attention span; and aggression. Homelessness also presents significant barriers to school success for children (see page 39 for more details).

# What is Homelessness and Why is it Worth Talking About?

## ❖ How can we end homelessness?

In order for people to reduce their risk of homelessness, they must have housing stability. To maintain housing stability over the long term, the following three criteria must be met:

- The **housing** must be accessible, safe, adequately maintained, of suitable size, affordable, provide security of tenure and be considered acceptable by the individual.
- People must have enough **income** to sustain the minimum standards for rent, utilities, food, health, clothing, education, transportation, and recreation.
- People must have the opportunity to access additional **support**, as needed, to help individuals live as independently as desired and to connect to others in meaningful ways.

## ❖ What is being done in the Waterloo Region to combat homelessness?

There are many activities currently underway in Waterloo Region focused on ending homelessness. Some of these include:

- Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group
  - [www.hhug.ca](http://www.hhug.ca)
- Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy
  - [www.region.waterloo.on.ca](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca) → Social Services → Social Planning → Homelessness
- Affordable Housing Strategy
  - [www.region.waterloo.on.ca/housing](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/housing)
- Supportive Housing Projects
  - i.e., <http://www.supportivehousingofwaterloo.org/>

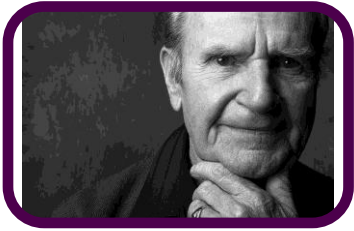
## ❖ Why should students learn about homelessness?

Homelessness is an important issue in our community, country, and world. Teaching children about homelessness has the potential for significant impact on the lives of the students and their communities. As a result of learning about homelessness, students will:

- become more compassionate, caring, and empathetic towards others;
- dismantle stereotypes and reduce judgmental attitudes;
- develop an appreciation for diversity, while recognizing wide-spread commonalities;
- enhance their capacity for critical thinking and moral reasoning; and
- appreciate and participate in community initiatives and organizations.

## ❖ References

- Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group Report Card Booklet (2009).
- Homelessness Partnering Strategy (2009).  
<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/index.shtml>
- Inventory of Housing Stability Programs in Waterloo Region (2009).
- Decter, A. (2007). Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto. [http://intraspec.ca/KidBuildersPhase3\\_FinalReport.pdf](http://intraspec.ca/KidBuildersPhase3_FinalReport.pdf)



*I am not a lesser person because I am a person experiencing homelessness.*

—Kitchener community member

## Suggestions for Guiding Classroom Learning about Homelessness

### ❖ General Guidelines

We recognize that lessons on homelessness can be challenging for both teachers and students. Thoughtful planning should take place when teaching any lesson on social issues, including homelessness. Listed below are some suggestions for introducing and guiding classroom learning about homelessness.

- Encourage open discussion about what students know about homelessness and about any questions they might have.
- Address stereotypes as they arise with facts (i.e., *The Truth about Homelessness*, p.6-8).
- Help students become more aware of what their home means to them. Link what their home means to them to how they might feel if they did not have a home.
- Explain that being homeless means that one does not have a place to call home. It might be for a day or two or for many weeks or months. Talk about how difficult it is.
- Help students understand that being homeless doesn't mean that someone has done something wrong. It isn't an illness and it certainly isn't anything someone wants. It can be a result of difficult times in a person's life.
- Discuss the different places people might live if they don't have a home (i.e., shelter, car, with friends).
- Explain that there are single people, families, and children who do not have a home.
- Read stories and books about people from all walks of life and/or about homelessness (p.37). Help students to realize that in spite of differences, people experience many of the same feelings.
- Conclude discussions of homelessness with ideas about how students and communities can help people who don't have a home (p.37).

### ❖ Language

As a community we are working to speak about homelessness using respectful language. We encourage community members to use "people-first" language, acknowledging homelessness as a (usually) temporary state of being. In the classroom, it is important to demonstrate respectful ways of talking about issues of homelessness. Below are some suggestions for language to use when discussing homelessness.

- The phrase "person experiencing homelessness" is preferred over "homeless person".
- In child-friendly language, the phrase "someone who doesn't have a home" is preferred over "homeless person".
- When discussing different conditions, use terms such as issues or disorders and not problems or illness. For example, "person with a mental health issue" is preferred over "mentally ill person".



# The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet

**Circle true or false for each of these statements.**

- 1. There are people who don't have a home in Waterloo Region.**

True / False

- 2. People choose not to have a home. They could get a home if they wanted to.**

True / False

- 3. All people without a home sleep on the street.**

True / False

- 4. There are children in Waterloo Region who don't have a home.**

True / False

- 5. People without homes are lazy and don't work.**

True / False

- 6. It would be cool to have no home because you can go anywhere and do anything you that you want.**

True / False

- 7. All people who don't have a home are addicted to drugs or alcohol.**

True / False

- 8. Homelessness only happens in big cities.**

True / False

- 9. If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.**

True / False

- 10. There is nothing we can do about homelessness.**

True / False

Adapted from: Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group (2009). Myths and Facts about Homelessness.

## The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet Answers

**1. There are people who don't have a home in Waterloo Region.**

**True.** Homelessness is a big issue for the Waterloo Region. The number of people who stay at emergency shelters is one way to measure homelessness. In 2008, 2783 people stayed in shelters around the region. This does not include people who choose not to stay at shelters or who “hide” their homelessness by staying with friends or family.

**2. People choose not to have a home. They could get a home if they wanted to.**

**False.** No one chooses to be homeless. Most people are shocked when it happens to them. Most people who don't have a home want one. However, it is very hard to find a safe home that people can afford. Some people also need extra support, like nursing care, to keep their homes. There are long waiting lists for these supports.

**3. All people without a home sleep on the street.**

**False.** People who sleep outside are just part of the total group of people who don't have a home. Some people stay in emergency shelters. Other people stay in their car or with a friend or family member—this type of homelessness is called “hidden homelessness”.

**4. There are children in Waterloo Region who don't have a home.**

**True.** There are people of all ages and genders who don't have a home in the Waterloo Region. In 2008, 244 children in Waterloo Region stayed in emergency shelters. There are also children who experience hidden homelessness.

**5. People without homes are lazy and don't work.**

**False.** People who have no home often have to work very hard to find places to eat and sleep. Also, many people who don't have a home want to get jobs. Some people who don't have a home have jobs. Other people have a hard time finding a job for reasons like health concerns.

**6. It would be cool to have no home because you can go anywhere and do anything you that you want.**

**False.** When you have no home it is very hard to find places to eat, sleep, and shower. It is also hard to find transportation. People who don't have a home also have to think about their safety.

## The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet Answers (page 2)

**7. All people who don't have a home are addicted to drugs or alcohol.**

**False.** *Some* people who don't have a home use substances like drugs or alcohol. Many other people without a home do not use substances like drugs or alcohol.

**8. Homelessness only happens in big cities.**

**False.** There are people who have no home everywhere. In smaller towns and villages, there are fewer formal programs like shelters to help people who don't have a home. In these areas, people might experience "hidden homelessness". In cities, people who don't have a home can more easily find emergency shelters and supports for their housing.

**9. If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.**

**False.** To end homelessness, people need more than just stable homes. They also need income and supports. People need a safe and secure home that they think is right for them. They also need enough income to meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food, clothing, and transportation. People also need different types of support, from friends and family and other people in the community to keep their homes for a long time. Homelessness can be ended with these three things—housing, income, and supports.

**10. There is nothing we can do about homelessness.**

**False.** Everyone has a part to play in ending homelessness. Students can help by writing letters to leaders asking them to end homelessness. You can also donate your time to an organization working to support people who don't have a home. Lots of these organizations also need donations of supplies like shampoo and socks to give to people who don't have a home. Finally, you can tell others about why people don't have homes and the things that can be done to make sure that everyone in Waterloo Region has a home.

❖ **References**

- Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group (2009). Myths and Facts about Homelessness.
- Inventory of Housing Stability Programs in Waterloo Region (2009).

# Lesson Plan Kindergarten–Grade 3

## *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen*

### ❖ Lesson Data

*Topic:* Homelessness

*Subject Areas:* Visual Arts, Writing, Oral Communication

*Time:* 40 minutes

#### *Overarching Objective*

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. The lesson will help students identify ways in which they can help individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. It will also prepare students to become caring, informed, and proactive citizens.

#### *Ontario Curriculum Expectations*

Grade 1 students will:	Grade 2 students will:	Grade 3 students will:
<i>Visual Arts</i> Apply the creative process to produce a variety of two- and three-dimensional art works, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings	<i>Visual Arts</i> Apply the creative process to produce a variety of two- and three-dimensional art works, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings	<i>Visual Arts</i> Apply the creative process to produce a variety of two- and three-dimensional art works, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings
<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience
<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes	<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes	<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes

Source: Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.  
The Arts, Grades 1-8. (2009).  
Language, Grades 1-8. (2006)

### ❖ Materials

- “Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen” by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
  - *Note:* The book “Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen” is available through the Waterloo Public Library. If you cannot access this book, this lesson can be easily adapted to accommodate any book about kindness or helping in the community.
- Copies of “Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen” worksheet (p.12)
- Pencils and drawing materials (i.e., pencil crayons) for students

## ❖ Procedure

### *Anticipatory Set/Motivation (5 minutes)*

- Write the word “homeless” on the board.
- Ask students what “homeless” means and record their responses.

### *Procedure/Development (10 minutes)*

- Discuss the cover of “Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen” and have students make predications based on the title and illustrations.
- Read the book, stopping to ask questions about how the class is feeling and what they have learned. Questions could include “Who ate at the soup kitchen?” and “Where would the people eat if the kitchen was not there?”
- After the book is complete, ask if the class predications were correct.

### *Instructional Summary (5 minutes)*

- Ask the class, “What do you think being homeless means, now that we have read the book?” Ask for definitions of soup kitchen and shelter. Make an anchor chart to represent the findings (see sample Anchor Chart on p.11).
- Ask the class “What can we do to help people who are who don’t have a home?” Offer other scenarios to verify further understanding (see Teacher Dialogue Questions on p.11).
- Introduce student worksheet and provide the class with two ideas of ways that students can help people who have no home.

### *Activity (20 minutes)*

- Students will complete the sheet and write down two ways (other than the ones given by the teacher) that they can help people who don’t have a home.
- Students independently draw a picture of one idea in the space provided.

### *Closure (5 Minutes)*

- Invite a couple of volunteers to share their ideas and pictures with the class.
- Make and display an anchor chart using the classroom ideas on chart paper.

### *Reinforcement/Independent Work*

- Ask students to talk to their parents about homelessness. Ask them to write down and bring to school one more idea for how they can help people who don’t have a home.

## ❖ Assessment

- Review and assess student worksheets. Gauge if the student’s picture matches one of their concepts of helping. Assess writing for legibility and language use.
- Assess student participation in discussion opportunities including ability to balance talking and listening. Also evaluate if students demonstrated active participation and respect for others during the classroom discussion.

## ❖ Academic & Other Considerations

### *Diversity/Accommodations/Special Needs*

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences.
- Adaptations for this lesson may include hand over hand drawing and scribing. Other worksheets could be created so that students could colour instead of draw.

### *Remedial/Enrichment Activities*

- Additional homelessness themed literature can be reviewed to reinforce the concept.
- Students who have mastered the activity and the concept of helping others could use the computer to create a collage (with clip art) about helping others.

## ❖ Additional Teaching Tools

### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

- Was the choice of book appropriate for lesson?
- Did the topic of homelessness bring up any personal experiences from the students?
- Could I have used a form of technology to get the idea across in a different way?
- Were different types of learners equally engaged in this lesson format?
- How can I improve this lesson?
- Did I allow enough time for discussion or did I move onto the independent work too quickly?

### *Anchor Chart for use with Lesson*

#### **What programs in our community are there to help people who don't have a home?**

##### **What can I do?**

- Some programs that help families who don't have a home are "soup kitchens". This is where somebody can go to get a hot meal.
- Shelters are a warm place for people to stay so they do not have to sleep outside.

##### **I can help by:**

- Treating people who do not have a home the same way that I would like to be treated.
- Collect blankets, hats, gloves and jackets and bring them to a shelter.
- Talk with my friends and family and tell them what I have learned about homelessness.

### *Teacher Dialogue Questions*

- Think about a time when you are feeling sick and want to stay in bed and cuddle with your favorite stuffed animal. What if you did not have a bed or your favorite stuffed animal to cuddle with? How would you feel?
- How would you feel if you had to switch schools a lot during the year? How would it feel to have to make new friends and get a new teacher?
- Think about your favorite things at your house; rooms, pets or toys. Now think about how you would feel if your family became homeless and you did not have your favorite things around you anymore.
- Think about getting ready for school in the morning, how would it feel to get ready in the morning at a shelter where there are a lot of other kids getting ready for school too? Would it be hard?

## ❖ Reference

- Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators (2007). Teacher Helpers.  
<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen Worksheet

**I can help people who don't have a home by...**

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# Lesson Plan Kindergarten—Grade 3

## *A Shelter in Our Car*

### ❖ Lesson Data

*Topic:* Homelessness

*Subject Areas:* Visual Arts, Oral Communication

*Time:* 60 minutes

#### *Overarching Objective*

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. This lesson identifies different shelters in our community and the basic needs of daily living. It will also prepare students to become caring, informed, and proactive citizens.

#### *Ontario Curriculum Expectations*

Grade 1 students will:	Grade 2 students will:	Grade 3 students will:
<i>Visual Arts</i> Apply the creative process to produce a variety of two- and three-dimensional art works, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings	<i>Visual Arts</i> Apply the creative process to produce a variety of two- and three-dimensional art works, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings	<i>Visual Arts</i> Apply the creative process to produce a variety of two- and three-dimensional art works, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings
<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes	<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes	<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes

Source: Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.  
The Arts, Grades 1-8. (2009).  
Language, Grades 1-8. (2006)

### ❖ Materials

- "A Shelter in Our Car" by Monica Gunning
  - *Note:* The book "A Shelter in Our Car" is available through the Kitchener Public Library. If you cannot access this book, this lesson can be easily adapted to accommodate any book about home or different kinds of homes.
- Chart paper & markers
- Paper and drawing materials (i.e., pencil crayons) for students



### ❖ Procedure

#### *Anticipatory Set/Motivation (10 min)*

- Create a KWL chart about homelessness. In the first column, record what students' know about homelessness.
- Ask students to discuss in pairs: What does the word homelessness make students think or feel? What questions do they have about people who don't have a home?
- Record students' questions in the second column of the KWL chart.

#### *Procedure/Development (15 min)*

- Read the title of "A Shelter in Our Car", and ask the group if they know what the word "shelter" means.
- Ask the group to brainstorm reasons why people need shelter (i.e., bad weather, physical safety, privacy).
- Ask the class make predictions about the book based on the cover.
- Read the book aloud to students, stopping to ask questions such as: Why does Zettie want Mama to drop her off at the corner instead of in front of the school? Why can't Zettie's mother "do some other kind of work"? What do you know about Benjie?
- Once you have finished reading, ask if the class predictions were correct. Ask students to make further predictions.

#### *Instructional Summary (5 min)*

- Ask students to brainstorm different types of shelters that people might live in. Record responses.
- Ask students to brainstorm things people need besides shelter.
- Ask students to imagine what Zettie's perfect home would look like. Have students think about what they see, hear, smell, and touch in this home.
- Invite students to draw Zettie's ideal home, including what they saw, heard,

smelled, and touched in their imaginations.

#### *Activity (20 min)*

- Students independently draw their ideal home for Zettie.

#### *Closure (10 Minutes)*

- Encourage students to share and explain their artwork with the class.
- Discuss that some people do not have a home. What might their shelters be like? Address questions that students identified in the KWL chart.
- Discuss what students have learned about homelessness, and record in the third column of the KWL chart.

#### *Reinforcement/Independent Work*

- Remind students that their homes are located in communities. Brainstorm what would be in their perfect community and record these ideas.
- Dedicate a wall of your classroom to this art project and post students' work on top of butcher paper, with considerable space between each piece of work. Read students the list they created describing the perfect community. Ask the class to draw in the community they described, connecting each individual home to the greater whole.

### ❖ Assessment

- Evaluate artwork based on inclusion of components of a home. Students will also be assessed on their ability to work independently and to follow oral instructions.
- Assess student participation in discussion opportunities including ability to balance talking and listening. Also evaluate if students demonstrated active participation and respect for others during the classroom discussion.

## ❖ Academic & Other Considerations

### *Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs*

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences.
- The teacher can guide students around the musical chair game individually if extra support is needed.

### *Remedial/Enrichment Activities*

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given other homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Students can create self-portraits or portraits of their families in the style of the illustrations for *A Shelter in Our Car*. Encourage unusual color combinations and exaggerated facial expressions as the illustrator uses.

## ❖ Additional Teaching Tools

### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

- Did I communicate effectively and identify the components of shelter?
- Did the activity represent the anticipated lesson objective?
- Was the picture book a good choice and were the students engaged?
- Was I giving the students feedback on a regular basis throughout the independent work?
- How can I enrich this lesson?

## ❖ References

- Children's Book Press (2004). Shelter in our car: Teacher's Guide.  
[http://www.childrensbookpress.org/guides/shelter/all\\_about.html](http://www.childrensbookpress.org/guides/shelter/all_about.html)
- Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators (2007). Teacher Helpers.  
<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>

### ❖ Lesson Data

*Lesson Topic:* Homelessness

*Subject Areas:* Drama and Writing

*Time:* 1 hour 20 minutes

#### *Overarching Objective*

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. The lesson will help students identify the different situations that families experiencing homelessness may experience. They will also identify ways in which they can help individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. It will also prepare students to become caring, informed, and proactive citizens.

#### *Ontario Curriculum Expectations*

Grade 4 students will:	Grade 5 students will:	Grade 6 students will:
<p><i>Drama</i> Apply the creative process to dramatic play and process drama, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and stories (B1.1 &amp; B1.2) Apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences (B2.1)</p>	<p><i>Drama</i> Apply the creative process to process drama and the development of drama works, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and stories (B1.1) Apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences (B2.1)</p>	<p><i>Drama</i> Apply the creative process to process drama and the development of drama works, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and multiple perspectives (B1.1) Apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences (B2.1)</p>
<p><i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience</p>	<p><i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience</p>	<p><i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience</p>

Source: Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.  
The Arts, Grades 1-8. (2009).  
Language, Grades 1-8. (2006)

### ❖ Materials

- Copies of homelessness scenarios (p.19 & 20)—1 scenario per student
- Chairs—enough for every student
- Music CD and CD player
- Chart paper and markers

## ❖ Procedure

### *Anticipatory Set/Motivation (10 min)*

- Ask the class if anyone remembers the childhood game “Musical Chairs.” Solicit responses of how it is played. Set up the chairs in a line, back to back as you would in a game of musical chairs in two-three groups based on class size.

### *Procedure/Development (15 min)*

- Write the word “homelessness” on a piece of chart paper. Solicit and record student responses on their thoughts about this word. Lead a larger group discussion on stereotypes of homelessness and the general topic.
- Distribute scenario cards (p.19&20) to students, ensuring that there are no repeated scenarios within groups. Have students independently practice reading the card dramatically. Encourage students to take on the role of the character they were given.
- Introduce the dramatic game “Musical Homes.” This is played like musical chairs. When the music stops, students are to find a chair safely. Let the students know that every chair in this game represents a home for someone. Remove one chair each round.

### *Activity (20 min)*

- Start the music on the CD Player.
- When the music stops, the student without a chair is the “person who has no home.” The student without a chair will read their scenario dramatically, playing the role of the “person who has no home”. They will then sit on the sideline until the game is complete.
- Ask students to rearrange the room, and sit in their normal seats.
- Discuss how the activity made them feel. What characters do they remember? Do the characters represent some of the initial thoughts about the

word homelessness (on chart paper)? How do you think the characters in the scenario cards feel?

- Discuss how people may become homeless (i.e., loss of job, family breakdown, or being evicted).

### *Closure (10 min)*

- Discuss and record ways to help people who don’t have a home.
- Have students read a couple of scenarios that the students found interesting. Identify ways in which the specific character could be helped.

### *Reinforcement/Independent work (20 min)*

- Have students write a reflection piece about how they felt during the game and why. Ask them to share their feelings about taking the role of a character that didn’t have a home. What would it feel like if it wasn’t a game and it was real? What do you think your character was feeling and how did you try to show their feelings in your role play? What parts of your character did you relate to and why? What did you not relate to? What did you learn about people who don’t have a home?
- Have them complete the reflection by finishing the sentence starter, “Today I learned that homelessness...”

## ❖ Assessment

- Evaluate students’ connections to the character and their ability to prepare and complete their role play.
- Assess completed reflections.
- Participation in larger group discussion will also be assessed. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.

## ❖ Academic & Other Considerations

### *Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs*

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences.
- The teacher can guide students around the musical chair game individually if extra support is needed.

### *Remedial/Enrichment Activities*

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given other homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Students can portray some of the other characters presented and come up with ideas to support and help the character in need.
- Students can plan an awareness campaign, including posters and informational brochures to support activities to help people who have no home.
- Students can start a letter writing campaign to encourage Members of Parliament to voice that everyone deserves a home.

## ❖ Additional Teaching Tools

### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

- Did the topic of homelessness bring up any personal experiences from the students?
- Could I have used a form of technology to get the idea across in a different way?
- Were different types of learners equally engaged in this lesson format?
- How can I improve this lesson?
- Did I allow enough time for discussion or did I move onto the independent work too quickly?

## ❖ Reference

- Bridge Communities. What's it like to be homeless?  
<http://www.bridgecommunities.org/What-we-do/Homeless-Curriculum.html>

**Scenario 1:** I'm 10 years old. My brothers are six and seven and my sister is two. It's just my mom and us kids. Landlords tell my mom they will not rent to families with more than three children. My uncle lets us sleep on the floor in his apartment. My brothers and I miss a lot of school because we don't sleep very well at night. My back hurts and my uncle is up at night making noise so I can't sleep. When I do go to school my teacher gets upset at me a lot for not paying attention. I try to pay attention in class but she never sees me trying. I am just so tired.

**Scenario 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 at Subway, but doesn't earn enough for us to have our own apartment. We had to move out of our last apartment because we couldn't pay the rent. We live in our car now. Other kids at school talk about friends and sleepovers and parties and all I can think about is where I will be taking a shower tonight.

**Scenario 5:** I'm seven. My mom, my sister, and I live with Grandma in her apartment. It's pretty crowded with all our clothes and everything. We just found out that we can't stay there very much longer because Grandma is going to move to a retirement home. I wonder where we will live now?

**Scenario 2:** I'm in eighth grade. We've moved so many times, I've gone to 10 different schools. We keep living with my mom's friends, until they get tired of us. 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 our own place, instead of just staying with my mom's friends.

**Scenario 4:** My dad left us last year. I'm nine, my sister is two and the baby is six months old. The landlord told us we had to move out. My mom wants to work, but she has nobody to watch us so she can go out and look for a job. We live in our car. Sometimes my mom leaves us alone at McDonald's so she can go to an appointment. I try to do my homework there.

**Scenario 6:** I'm 8 and my mom is a single mom. She works in a Laundromat and only makes \$8.00 per hour. The owner lets us sleep in the Laundromat at night because we don't have enough money to rent an apartment. I don't tell any of my friends at school this. I don't think that my teacher even knows. I am embarrassed.

**Scenario 7:** I'm eight. I love to play hockey. When I was at school the other day I tried to join in on a hockey game that other boys in the playground were playing. They did not let me play. They said that I stink and am dirty. It is hard to keep clean when you have to share a bathroom with lots of other families. I live in a shelter. Sometimes I don't get to use the tub for a week. I almost never get my laundry done as my mom never has enough quarters. I just wish we had our own place.

**Scenario 9:** My dad and I don't need anyone. I am 12 years old and I live with my dad in a tent by the river. When I go to school I get picked on almost every day, but I don't care. I won't be at that school long anyway because I will be moving into my new place soon. My teacher complains that I don't finish my homework but I won't have to deal with her soon when I move. Why should I care what she thinks? She doesn't care that I live in a tent. She gives me these projects where I have to go to the library and research things. I can't get a library card because I don't have an address and it is really hard to keep everything dry when it rains. In a couple of weeks I am sure that I will have my own place with my dad.

**Scenario 8:** I am in Grade 5. My birthday is coming up next week. At my school we are supposed to bring in treats for the class when it is our birthday. Teachers say we don't have to but every kid does. I know my mom can't get treats for my class. We are living in a shelter and my mom is saving up to get her own place. Maybe I will just say I am sick on my birthday so I don't have to go to school.

**Scenario 10:** I am 6 years old. I was at my school library with my class yesterday and wanted to take out this great book on insects. It had a lot of nice pictures in it. The librarian told me that I couldn't take the book home because it is very crowded where I live and the book could get lost. I live at the shelter down the street. Everyone else got to take 2 books home but I had to keep mine in the library. That's not fair! I promised her that I would take care of them but she still wouldn't let me.

# Lesson Plan Grades 4–6

## *What Causes Homelessness?*

### ❖ Lesson Data

*Lesson Topic:* Homelessness

*Subject Areas:* Writing and Oral Communication

*Time:* 1 hour

#### *Overarching Objective*

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. The lesson will help students identify and address stereotypes around poverty and homelessness. This lesson will also prepare students to become empathetic, caring, informed, and proactive citizens.

#### *Ontario Curriculum Expectations*

Grade 4 students will:	Grade 5 students will:	Grade 6 students will:
<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience
<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes	<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes	<i>Oral Communication</i> Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes

Source: Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.  
The Arts, Grades 1-8. (2009).  
Language, Grades 1-8. (2006)

### ❖ Materials

- Pictures of to generate discussion (p.24 &25)
- Why Do People Lose Their Home? Activity Page (p.26 & 27)



### ❖ Procedure

#### *Anticipatory Set/Motivation (10 min)*

- Hold up or project the photo of the small home (p.24). Ask students “What words do you think about when you see this picture?” Assure students that this is an open discussion and there are no right or wrong answers. Write a few of the key words on the board.
- Hold up or project the photo of the individual experiencing homelessness (p.25). Ask students “What words do you think of when you see this picture?” Write a few key words on the board.

#### *Procedure/Development (15 min)*

- Ask students what the word “stereotype” means. After students express their views, provide a dictionary definition.
- As a class, discuss where stereotypes come from (i.e., from parents, media, etc.). Discuss the idea that many stereotypes are the result of a lack of accurate information.
- Introduce the purpose of the activity: to help students remove some of their stereotypes about people who don’t have a home, by gaining an understanding of the reasons why some people might not have a home.
- Distribute **Why Do Some People Lose Their Home?** activity pages (p.26 & 27).
- Read aloud the ten reasons that many people lose their homes. Discuss any questions from students.
- Read the two scenarios on the activity page and encourage class to match it to the most appropriate reason for people not having a home (Story 1 links with Reason 1 & Story 2 links with Reason 7).
- Divide the class into eight teams.
- Assign one reason why people do not have a home to each team. Ask each team to write a short story that

illustrates the reason that was assigned to them. Stories should touch on the person’s life before they did not have a home, why they do not have a home, and their life with no home.

#### *Activity (25 min)*

- Students write the short story in teams.

#### *Closure (10 min)*

- At completion of team activity, ask the teams to read their reason and share with the class the story they wrote.
- Discuss how stereotypes of students changed as a result of reading the reasons people might not have a home and writing the story. Ask students what was most surprising to them about the activity.
- Remind students that, contrary to some stereotypes, many people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness are employed.

#### *Reinforcement/Independent work*

- Discuss what might be done in the case of two groups’ scenarios to help the individual to have a home. What agencies might be able to help? What things need to change?

### ❖ Assessment

- Evaluate stories for understanding of reasons provided.
- Assess students’ participation in teams.
- Participation in larger group discussion will also be assessed. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.

### ❖ **Academic & Other Considerations**

#### *Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs*

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences.
- The teacher can provide teams with support as needed.

#### *Remedial/Enrichment Activities*

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given other homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Students can write an additional story independently.

### ❖ **Additional Teaching Tools**

#### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

- Did the topic of homelessness bring up any personal experiences from the students?
- Could I have used a form of technology to get the idea across in a different way?
- Were different types of learners equally engaged in this lesson format?
- How can I improve this lesson?
- Did I allow enough time for discussion or did I move onto the independent work too quickly?

### ❖ **References**

- Walker, Nancy. <http://www.utdanacenter.org/theo/>



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## Why Do Some People Lose Their Home?

Some of the reasons people lose their home include:

1. The person whose income supports the family loses a job.
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.
3. 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.
4. A single mother who works full-time loses her daycare because the day-care provider has become ill. The mother has to quit her job to care for her children.
5. A single person's roommate moves out of the apartment. Rent is too expensive for him to pay on his own, so he becomes behind on payments.
6. A full-time job on which the family depends to make ends meet becomes a part-time job.
7. The family's income is not enough to pay for basic living expenses like rent, food, and clothing.
8. 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.
9. A single person is living with her parents because she needs some help with daily tasks like making meals. Her parents are getting older and she can't live with them anymore.
10. The family has an unplanned major expense, such as a trip because of a family emergency.

### Activity

1. Listen to your teacher read the two stories below.
2. From the ten reasons listed above, write in the key words of the reason that goes best with each story.
3. Work with your team to write a little story about the reason that is assigned to your team. Stories should touch on the person's life before they did not have a home, why they do not have a home, and their life with no home.

Story	Reason
Mr. Chase was just laid off. His employer gave him one week's wages. The Chase family doesn't have a savings account. None of their relatives can help, and, without a job, there's no way to borrow money. Mr. Chase will qualify for unemployment insurance benefits of \$140 a week, but that check won't arrive for several weeks. The house rent (\$550) and the car payment (\$192) are due in a week.	
Last month, the landlord told the Williams family that their rent would go up to \$860 in 30 days. They couldn't afford to pay rent and to buy food for the family. When they didn't have enough money to pay the full amount on the first of the month, the landlord gave them three days to move out.	

### **Story Activity**

Write a story based on your assigned reason about the person's life before they did not have a home, why they do not have a home, and their life with no home. You are allowed to use more paper if you need extra space.

**Names:**

**Our Reason:**

**Our Story:**

# Lesson Plan Grades 7 & 8

## *The Johnsons' Misfortune*

### ❖ Lesson Data

*Lesson Topic:* Homelessness

*Subject Areas:* Writing & Reading

*Time:* 1 hour 20 minutes

#### *Overarching Objective*

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. This lesson identifies different community resources in Waterloo Region which meet the basic needs of daily living. The lesson will help students identify ways in which they can help individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. It will also prepare students to become caring, informed, and proactive citizens.

#### *Ontario Curriculum Expectations*

<b>Grade 7 students will:</b>	<b>Grade 8 students will:</b>
<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience
<i>Reading</i> Read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning	<i>Reading</i> Read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning
<i>Choices into Action</i> Demonstrate social responsibility both at school and in the community	<i>Choices into Action</i> Demonstrate social responsibility both at school and in the community

Source: Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Language, Grades 1-8. (2006)

Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools. (1999).

### ❖ Materials

- "The Johnsons' Misfortune" problem sheet (p.31)
- Box filled with a sleeping bag, bar of soap, blanket, piece of bread, and backpack
- Computer access for students (one for every 2 students)
- Phone books (one for every 4 students)

## ❖ Procedure

### *Anticipatory Set/Motivation (10 min)*

- Bring a mystery box (filled with sleeping bag, bar of soap, blanket, piece of bread, and backpack) to front of class.
- Invite students to pick an item from the mystery box and make predictions on about the lesson. Keep discussion minimal and tell the class that they will work in pairs to learn more about homelessness.
- Ask students to complete a think/pair/share exercise where students partner up and discuss what the word homelessness makes them think or feel. What questions do they have about people who have no home?
- Have pairs share their responses with the class.

### *Procedure/Development (15 min)*

- Divide the students into pairs and give each pair a copy of a hypothetical homeless situation, "The Johnsons' Misfortune". Explain that each pair will use the Internet and phone books to find resources and agencies that could meet the family's needs.
- Read aloud the story with the class and ask: What are the basic needs? What are the possible sources that can be used to meet the basic needs? Can the solutions be implemented quickly?
- Have pairs discuss the questions briefly and share their initial thoughts.

### *Instructional Summary (10 min)*

- Take students to the computer lab, and provide every two pairs with a phone book.
- Re-visit computer rules with students.
- Ask students in pairs to develop a written plan for meeting the family's basic needs. They can find information on the Internet and in the phone book. They should record what the needs are,

and how each need can be met (i.e., what organization, where they are located, contact information).

### *Activity (30 min)*

- Students work in pairs on their plan.
- To challenge groups, ask additional questions such as: How can the remaining money best be used? How large of an apartment, if any, can they afford? Can they afford to stay in a motel or a hotel for a few nights? What is the cost of food for the family?

### *Closure (20 min)*

- Discuss what challenges they encountered when creating a plan for the family.
- Review each question and have students offer responses. Correct and provide alternative options to the ones that were found by the students during the web quest.
- Have pairs share their plans with each other.

### *Reinforcement/Independent Work*

- Students will write an independent response on how difficult it is to have no home. They will reflect on the family experience and write an empathetic response outlining the struggles that people who don't have a home face on a daily basis.

## ❖ Assessment

- The written plans for meeting community needs and independent reflections will be assessed. Students will also be assessed on their group work skills. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.



## ❖ Academic & Other Considerations

### *Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs*

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences.
- Provide extra time in the computer lab for students.
- If needed, provide direct guidance to pairs.
- Create and distribute a list of possible community resources to pairs who have difficulty seeking out the appropriate community resources independently.

### *Remedial/Enrichment Activities*

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given other homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Students who have mastered the activity can create a brochure outlining an agency that supports people who don't have a home. All facets of the agency can be highlighted including services provided and contact information.

## ❖ Additional Teaching Tools

### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

- Did I communicate effectively and explain the expectations thoroughly?
- Did the activity represent the anticipated lesson objective?
- Were the students engaged while working in the computer lab?
- Did I allow for enough time to complete the plan?
- Was I giving the students feedback on a regular basis throughout their group work?
- How can I enrich this lesson?

## ❖ Reference

- Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (2003).  
<http://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org/resources/curriculum/>

### ***The Johnsons' Misfortune***

The Johnson family just moved to Waterloo Region, from St. John's, Newfoundland. Mr. Johnson is to start a new job within two weeks. The family arrived in town early, so that they could get acquainted with the city. They also wanted to get the three kids, ages 8, 12 and 14, into school. They found a small apartment to rent. The Johnsons have about \$1,500.00 in cash which will have to last them at least one month.

The Johnsons have been out shopping for school clothes. They have spent \$275.00. When they arrive home, they find that there has been a fire! The fire destroyed their apartment and all of their possessions. Because they are new in town and have not made any friends, they have no one to turn to for help. They are now homeless!

**Map out a plan of community resources to meet the Johnson family's basic needs.**

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**Map out a plan of community resources to meet the Johnson family's basic needs.**

# Lesson Plan Grades 7 & 8

## *Resolving Conflicts at Home*

### ❖ Lesson Data

*Lesson Topic:* Homelessness

*Subject Areas:* Drama & Writing

*Time:* 1 hour 20 minutes

#### *Overarching Objective*

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. Students will gain an understanding of some causes of friction at home and how to resolve conflicts in the home.

#### *Ontario Curriculum Expectations*

<b>Grade 7 students will:</b>	<b>Grade 8 students will:</b>
<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<i>Writing</i> Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience
<i>Drama</i> Apply the creative process to process drama and the development of drama works, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and multiple perspectives (B1.1 & B1.3)	<i>Drama</i> Apply the creative process to process drama and the development of drama works, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and multiple perspectives (B1.1 & B1.3)
<i>Choices into Action</i> Describe the many aspects of relationships, and explain and demonstrate how skills are used to interact positively with others in diverse settings at school and in the community	<i>Choices into Action</i> Describe the many aspects of relationships, and explain and demonstrate how skills are used to interact positively with others in diverse settings at school and in the community

Source: Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Language, Grades 1-8. (2006)

The Arts, Grades 1-8. (2009).

Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools. (1999).

### ❖ Materials

- Role play starter sentences (p.35)

### ❖ Procedure

#### *Anticipatory Set/Motivation (10 min)*

- Introduce the importance of home in our lives. Give a personal example: “I remember being so glad to get home because...”
- Ask students to work in pairs and write the things that make home important to them (i.e., pets, television, privacy, family, etc). Have students share their responses. Record the most frequent responses.

#### *Procedure/Development (15 min)*

- Ask students to share issues that can cause conflict between youth and parents or siblings. List five or six of the best examples on the board.
- Ask students in pairs to choose one of the examples and list ways the problem could be resolved. Have students also record their feelings related to the problems.
- Have some students share what they discussed.
- Discuss what could happen if the issues were not resolved. Provide an example such as “Amy was so fed up with the rules at home that she packed a bag and went to a friend’s house”.
- Introduce the idea of homelessness and why it can happen to youth. Have the students work with their partner again and list the people that they think they could turn to for help (eg. teachers, grandparents, friends, parents, etc.). List all reasonable possibilities on the board.

#### *Activity (45 min)*

- Tell students that they will be participating in a role-play activity. In partners, students will receive a starter sentence and will develop a role play around the sentence. They will act the conflict and will come to a resolution.

Each role-play should last between 1 and 2 minutes.

- Distribute starter sentences to partners (p. 35).
- Provide students with 10 minutes to prepare their role-play.
- Have groups come up in front of the class to act out their conflict and solutions.

#### *Closure (20 min)*

- Discuss the role plays. Ask the students to discuss different ways they might have defused situations.
- Revisit the list that was created at the beginning of the lesson about what makes home important to them. Solicit further responses from students.

#### *Reinforcement/Independent work*

- Have students write a reflection answering the following questions, “If I am upset at home with my parents or siblings, I...” and “Imagine you suddenly had to leave home. Where do you think you would be able to stay? List all the places you think you would be able to stay. How long could you expect to stay there?”

### ❖ Assessment

- Evaluate students’ ability to prepare and complete their role play.
- Review and assess student reflections. Check for understanding regarding the meaning of resolving conflict.
- Students will also be assessed on their independent work and ability to follow oral instructions. Participation in larger group discussion will also be assessed. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.

## ❖ Academic & Other Considerations

### *Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs*

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences of conflict or homelessness.
- Provide extra time for reflection if students are having difficulty understanding the concept of conflict.
- A scribe can be used during the reflection for students who need the extra support with writing responses.

### *Remedial/Enrichment Activities*

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given other homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Students who have mastered the activity can pick out another conflict and create responses to the conflict.
- Individual discussion to explore the concept further.

## ❖ Additional Teaching Tools

### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

- Did the topic of conflict or homelessness bring up any personal experiences from the students?
- Could I have used a form of technology to get the idea across in a different way?
- Were the different types of learners all equally engaged in this lesson format?
- Did everyone participate in the role play exercise? Is there another activity I can implement to foster further understanding?
- Did I allow for lots of time to discuss the topic?
- Did individual students need more time to complete the reflection questions, given the seriousness of the topic?

## ❖ References

- Crisis UK (n.d.).  
<http://www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/lessonplans.html>

Why can't I watch what I want? She always watches what she wants.	I need the computer to do my homework now and he's just playing games on it. Tell him to get off.	She won't let me have the remote and I want to watch my show.
It's not fair, I did the dishes last night. It's his turn tonight.	Mom says you've got to help me tidy our room, so stop watching TV and help.	Why is it me that always has to walk the dog? Why can't they do it? I hate them.
That's my game and you can't play it. Keep your hands off it.	Mom, tell her that she can't keep taking my clothes without asking.	How come he is allowed to have a cell phone and I'm not?
Can you please be quiet? I'm trying to concentrate on my homework.	You always have your friends over and then shut me out of the room. I want my friends to be here.	I don't want to share a room anymore, all my friends have their own room.
But every else is staying out until 10 o'clock. Why can't I?	Absolutely everyone is going to Jessie's party. I'll be the only one not there!	Jack's mom lets him go to the movies on his own.
You promised me that if I let him watch his DVD yesterday I could watch mine today. He won't let me.	How come you're always comparing me to Albert?	Why do I have to go to swimming lessons on Saturday just because he does? I don't like swimming.



*I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.*

—Helen Keller

## Next Action Steps

There are many ways that your classroom can take action towards ending homelessness and promoting housing stability. Below are action ideas in Waterloo Region.

### ❖ Advocate

- Write letters to the Member of Parliament (MP) and the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) in your area. Describe how homelessness affects you and your community and ask for long-term solutions to homelessness which include housing, income, and supports.

### ❖ Donate

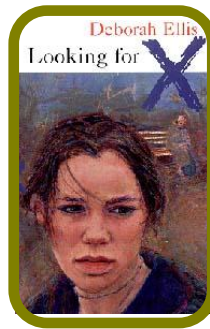
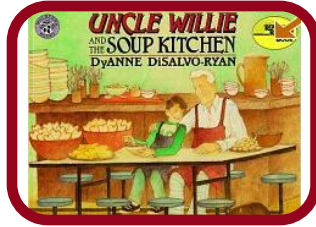
- Collect funds or supplies that are needed by local emergency shelters, drop-in centres, or outreach workers. Required supplies might include: towels; socks; hats and mitts; shampoo; hotel toiletries; toothpaste; or can openers. To find out which supplies are most in need, contact an agency working in our community. Some examples include:
  - YWCA—[www.ywcakw.on.ca](http://www.ywcakw.on.ca), 519.576.8856
  - Supportive Housing of Waterloo (SHOW)—  
[www.supportivehousingofwaterloo.org](http://www.supportivehousingofwaterloo.org), 519.571.9408
  - Reaching Our Outdoor Friends (ROOF)— [www.roof-agency.net](http://www.roof-agency.net), 519.742.2788
  - House of Friendship—[www.houseoffriendship.org](http://www.houseoffriendship.org), 519.742.8327
  - Argus Residence for Young People—[www.argusresidence.com](http://www.argusresidence.com), 519.623.7991
  - Cambridge Shelter—[www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca](http://www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca), 519.624.9305
  - Safe Haven Shelter—[www.lutherwood.ca](http://www.lutherwood.ca), 519.749.2450 x240
- Organize a food drive for one of the two local food banks:
  - The Food Bank of Waterloo Region—[www.thefoodbank.ca](http://www.thefoodbank.ca), 519.743.5576
  - Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank—[www.cambridgefoodbank.on.ca](http://www.cambridgefoodbank.on.ca), 519.622.6650

### ❖ Volunteer/Tour

- Take a tour of a local agency working with individuals experiencing homelessness or individuals with low income. The agencies listed above are excellent points of contact.
- Contact local agencies to find out if there are opportunities for students to volunteer at the organization or to create something the organization could use (e.g., posters).

### ❖ Inform Others

- Organize an assembly focusing on issues of homelessness. Invite someone from an organization listed above to share local experiences of homelessness.
- Encourage students to talk about the causes of and solutions to homelessness with family and friends.



## Teaching Resources

### ❖ Picture Books

- Fly Away Home—Eve Bunting (1993)
- December—Eve Bunting (1997)
- Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen—DyAnne Disalvo (1991)
- A Shelter in Our Car—Monica Gunning (2004)
- The Lady in the Box—Ann McGovern (1997)
- The Cardboard Shack Beneath the Bridge—Tim Huff (2007)

### ❖ Novels

- Monkey Island—Paula Fox (1991)
- Looking for X—Deborah Ellis (1999)

### ❖ Music (suitable for grades 7 & 8)

- Another Day in Paradise—Phil Collins (1989)
- Moments—Emerson Drive (2007)

### ❖ Videos

- Land Before Time (1988)
- Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey (1993)

### ❖ Websites for more information

- [www.hhug.ca](http://www.hhug.ca)
- [www.region.waterloo.on.ca](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca) → Social Services → Social Planning → Homelessness
- [www.homelesshub.ca/](http://www.homelesshub.ca/)
- [www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/](http://www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/) → search “Home Free”





## Community Resources

Our community has a variety of resources for families and children experiencing homelessness or living on a low income. This list includes a selection of the most common resources families may access.

### ❖ **Community Outreach Workers**

Information Line: 519.883.2290

The Community Outreach Program assists children and families in accessing services they need in their own community. These services include employment, education, recreation, food, clothing, shelter, child care and children's needs (e.g., school supplies), counselling, and transportation.

### ❖ **Crisis Support**

*Kids Help Phone*

1.800.668.6868

*Waterloo Region Crisis Line*

519.744.1813

### ❖ **Food**

*Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank*

519.622.6650

[www.cambridgefoodbank.on.ca](http://www.cambridgefoodbank.on.ca)

*Food Bank of Waterloo Region*

519.743.5576

[www.thefoodbank.ca](http://www.thefoodbank.ca)

### ❖ **Clothing & Furniture**

*Saint Vincent de Paul KW*

519.742.8622

[www.svdpthriftstorekw.org/](http://www.svdpthriftstorekw.org/)

*Saint Vincent de Paul Cambridge*

519.653.4162

### ❖ **Emergency Shelters for Families**

*YWCA Mary's Place*

519.744.0120

[www.ywcakw.on.ca](http://www.ywcakw.on.ca)

*Cambridge Shelter*

519.624.9305

[www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca](http://www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca)

### ❖ **Emergency Shelters for Youth**

*Safe Haven Shelter (12-15)*

519.749.1450 x240

[www.lutherwood.ca](http://www.lutherwood.ca)

*Argus Residence for Young People (16-24)*

519.623.7991

[www.argusresidence.com](http://www.argusresidence.com)

### ❖ **Housing Assistance**

*Lutherwood Housing Action Centre*

519.743.2460 x401

[www.lutherwood.ca](http://www.lutherwood.ca)

*Rent Bank & Eviction Prevention Program*

519.743.2460 x406

[www.lutherwood.ca](http://www.lutherwood.ca)

*Energy Assistance*

519.883.2100 → Select Option 1

*The Working Centre Housing Help Desk*

519.743.1151 x117

[www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org)

*John Howard Society (Cambridge Office)*

519.622.0815

[www.waterloo.johnhoward.on.ca](http://www.waterloo.johnhoward.on.ca)



*I don't ever want to go back to being homeless. I'd rather try to do something to prevent that happening because everybody deserves their own place to call home.*

—Delilah, age 12 (*Home Free Calgary*, 2008)

## Ways to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness

### ❖ Common Characteristics of Children Experiencing Homelessness

While the population of school-aged children experiencing homelessness is varied, there are some characteristics which are observed frequently in this population. Some signs of a child experiencing homelessness may include:

- Poor health, nutrition, and hygiene
- Low self-esteem
- Unwillingness to form relationships with peers and difficulty trusting people
- Short attention span
- Aggression
- *Reference:* NCHE.

<http://www.serve.org/NCHE/>

### ❖ Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education

- Frequent moves and school changes can cause gaps in knowledge and repetition of material. It can also lead to wrongful diagnoses of abilities.
- Children may be bullied and teased by their peers.
- Children may have difficulty completing homework due to crowded living conditions and a lack of necessary resources (e.g., markers).
- Emotional and behavioural issues (e.g., aggression) can be barriers to school success for children experiencing homelessness.
- *Reference:* Decter, A. (2007). *Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto*

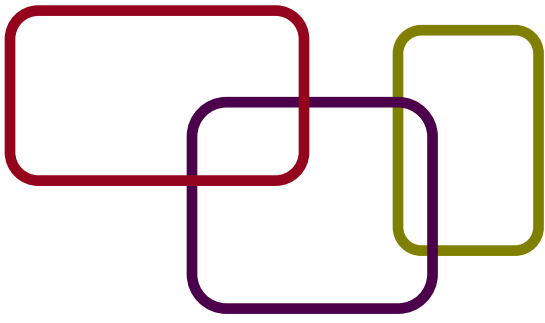
### ❖ Strategies for Promoting School Success

- Assess literacy immediately to ensure that instruction is at appropriate level.
- Adjust assignments to accommodate limited shelter resources and crowded living conditions.
- Plan for the next transition immediately. Create a parent folder with important documents to take to new school.
- Allow students to keep their possessions nearby and do not take away belongings as a disciplinary measure.
- Welcome all students into your classroom and create a class climate of acceptance and understanding.
- Provide a structured, predictable routine and refrain from rearranging the classroom furniture too often.
- Separate tasks into meaningful parts and don't assign too much work that takes place outside of school hours.
- *Reference:* NCHE.

<http://www.serve.org/NCHE/>

### ❖ Ways to Support Parents/Guardians Experiencing Homelessness

- Refer parents/guardians to the community resources listed on page 38.
- Communicate regularly regarding student's school performance.
- Solicit suggestions for how to best accommodate the student's living situation (e.g., materials to provide to shelter).



## Parent & Guardian Fact Sheet

**Dear Parent or Guardian,**

I am writing to let you know that next week our class will be discussing local issues of homelessness. I understand that for some students, this might be a new topic that brings up many questions. Your child may want to ask these questions and discuss their feelings about the topic with you. I am providing you with some fast facts about homelessness in Waterloo Region so that you might feel more prepared to discuss this issue at home.

❖ **Fast facts:**

- People don't choose to be homeless and in fact, most people want a home.
- People without adequate housing, income and support are more likely to fall into homelessness than those who have adequate housing, income and support.
- In 2008, 2783 people stayed in shelters around the region. This included 244 children. Many more people experience homelessness but do not stay in shelters. Some people experience "hidden homelessness" and live with friends or family members while they don't have a home.
- The local emergency shelters which serve families are the YWCA Mary's Place and Cambridge Shelter. The local emergency shelter which serves youth age 12 to 15 is Lutherwood's Safe Haven Shelter.
- Providing housing with support services is roughly 10 times less expensive than the cost of emergency service provision.

If you would like any additional resources or have any questions about this topic, don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



## More about the HHUG

*If you are interested in learning more about the HHUG, or becoming a member, please visit the website at [www.hhug.ca](http://www.hhug.ca), email [hhug@lutherwood.ca](mailto:hhug@lutherwood.ca), or phone 519.743.2460 x356.*

## Your Feedback

We would love to hear from you!

*Did you find this toolkit helpful for your classroom?*

*How did your students react to discussions about homelessness?*

*Was there any thing that you felt was missing from this guide?*

*How can we improve the toolkit for future editions?*

If you would like to provide feedback regarding this toolkit, or if you have any questions, please email [hhug@lutherwood.ca](mailto:hhug@lutherwood.ca) or phone 519.743.2460 x356.