

Recommended Fair Housing Lesson Plan

Objective: Students will explore the meaning of diversity, discrimination, equality, and civil rights (historical and contemporary) to understand the significance of the Fair Housing Act.

Materials: Blue/Red Pens
Franklin the Fair Housing Fox stickers
"Reconozalo" Comic Book in Spanish/English
Coloring Books/Crayons

Background:

Congress passed and President Lyndon Johnson signed the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act) on April 11, 1968 just 4 days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The passage of the Fair Housing Act honored Dr. King's work for civil rights and also addressed the findings of the Kerner Commission which called for a national fair housing law.

The Fair Housing Act, as amended in 1988, makes it against the law to treat people differently when trying to buy, rent, or sell a home because of their race, color, national origin (where they were born), religion, sex (whether they are a boy or girl), if they have a family (also known as familial status) which includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal guardians, pregnant women, and people trying to get custody of children under the age of 18, and handicap (disability).

HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) is responsible for enforcing the Fair Housing Act so that all Americans can live in the housing of their choice that they can afford.

Activities: Diversity & Discrimination Exercises

Exercise #1: How does discrimination make me feel?

Purpose: To let students experience diversity and discrimination in a tangible way. To help them understand that there are several ways to group people.

Ask everyone upon entering the room to select a pen either red or blue. **(Move on to Exercise#2)** Ask all students with a red pen to stand on the left side of the room and those with a blue pen to stand on the right side of the room. Randomly select which side of the room to begin a private conversation (for about 2 minutes) about their favorite television programs. Ask those on the opposite side how that made them feel.

Exercise #2: Read from a list of about five statements (depending on time constraints) about likes, dislikes, gender, race, and ethnicity. With each statement ask students to whom the statement applies to walk to a particular corner of the room. For two of the five statement-groups, tell them they will get a reward i.e. an extra hour of recess. Ask the students how the exercise made them feel.

Suggested statements:

Note: These can vary depending on the class. *Make sure the statements reflect the class' population.* It is useful to have a statement or two that applies to no one in the room. Have a playful mix of both serious and light statements.

If you are a girl, walk over here...

If you are a boy, walk over there...

If you wear glasses...

If you like chocolate...

If you are Latino...

If you have a brother...

If you are thirty...

If you have a sister...

If you were born in a country other than the U.S....

If you live next door to a neighbor whose race or ethnicity is different from your own...

If you like popcorn...

If you are Jewish...

If you are biracial...

If your blood is red

Discussion Questions for Class:

How did you feel when I separated you into groups?

What did you think when (name the group that got the reward) got the reward (i.e. hour of recess) just because of the group they were in?

Fair Housing Terms:

Write the following words on the board and discuss each. Be sure to tie these fair housing terms to the earlier activities and how HUD/FHEO works to create fair housing for all Americans.

As defined in Merriam-Webster's wordcentral.com

1. **Diversity** (noun): the condition of being different
2. **Discrimination** (noun): the treating of some people better than others without any fair or proper reason
3. **Equality** (noun): treating people the same
4. **Fair housing** (noun): the sale and rental of housing free of discriminatory practices or policies
5. **Segregation** (noun): the separation or isolation of a race, class, or group

Questions for discussion:

What does it mean to be fair?

How does your school benefit from having children of different backgrounds, religion, and cultures? Why?

Do the neighborhoods you live in have diversity? Or would you say they are segregated?

Recommended Readings:

- ❖ *DOTS a Fair Housing Tale* by Gary Ross and illustrated by Anwar Morse.
- ❖ *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis
- ❖ *Dreaming In Color Living In Black And White: Our Own Stories of Growing Up Black in America (Children of Conflict (Young Readers))* by Laurel Holliday
- ❖ *Ribbons* by Laurence Yep
- ❖ *Oh, Freedom!* (Paperback) by Casey King (Author), Linda Barrett Osborne (Author)
- ❖ *A Place at the Table: Struggles for Equality in America* by Maria Fleming