

Third-grade differentiation

■ Reading and discussion tips:

- Help students understand the terms *advocate* and *advocacy*. Pronounce the words aloud and have students repeat them after you. Write the words on the board and underline the Latin root *voc* in each. Point out that *voc* is similar to *voice*, which relates to the idea that advocacy means “speaking up” for something.
- After you read and discuss the first five questions in the “Advocacy FAQs,” give students an opportunity to share other examples of advocacy. They might point to advocacy they’ve seen on the news or that they or their caregivers have participated in directly. Make sure they understand that advocacy entails supporting a cause and encouraging others to do so.

■ Activity tips:

- The “Fact sheet” contains a number of mathematical terms that you might wish to review with students. For example, it includes fractions such as one-third and percentages such as 20 percent. If possible, use visuals and manipulatives, such as tower cubes, to illustrate each concept.
- If necessary, provide a paragraph shell or sentence stems for students to fill in, rather than having them write their paragraphs from scratch.
- Give students a short checklist of specific things to look for as they review their partners’ paragraphs. Your list might include the following: Are all facts from the Fact Sheet copied down correctly? Are all words spelled correctly? Are all sentences as clear as possible?

■ Assessment tips:

- Students may have trouble understanding the “Paragraph content” section of the rubric. To help them understand what it means for their paragraph to contain “in-depth understanding of the issues” and “original thought and opinion,” show them one model that has these qualities and another that doesn’t. Discuss the models, and give students a chance to revise their paragraphs as needed.

Fifth-grade differentiation

■ Reading and discussion tips:

- Have students look up the terms *advocate* and *advocacy* in a dictionary. Ask them to read the pronunciation key and say the words aloud. Challenge them to identify the words’ Latin root (*voc*, meaning “voice”) and to explain the connection between the root and the word’s meaning.
- After reading the “Advocacy FAQs,” ask students to share examples of advocacy they’ve heard of or participated in. Based on the last question in the FAQ, have them offer ways each example of advocacy could have been even more effective.

■ Activity tips:

- Teach basic concepts of persuasion, such as appealing to emotion and logic. Show students a newspaper editorial and help them identify examples of each type of persuasion. Then challenge students to appeal to both logic and emotion in their paragraphs about the importance of decent, affordable housing.
- Have students prepare questions in advance for their local Habitat for Humanity representative. The questions should focus on how to improve a specific part of their message about housing.

■ Assessment tips:

- Show students the rubric in advance so they know how they’ll be evaluated. In addition, give students a few sample paragraphs and ask them to score each one according to the rubric. Discuss their findings, and make sure they understand all of the grading criteria.

■ Optional extension tips:

- Allow students to create their videos in small groups rather than as a whole class. Let groups come up with creative formats for their videos.

Grade four

Objectives

Students will:

- Read about the basics of advocacy and how Habitat for Humanity is involved.
- Write a paragraph addressed to a local politician on the importance of decent, affordable housing.
- Help design a booklet containing your class paragraphs to send to the politician.

National content standards

Social studies

- Students distinguish among local, state and national government and identify representative leaders at these levels, such as mayor, governor and president.
- Students recognize and give examples of the tensions between the wants and needs of individuals and groups, and concepts such as fairness, equity and justice.

Language arts

- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

Scope

- Two class periods (30 to 45 minutes each).

Materials

- **Tip sheet:** “Advocacy: Frequently asked questions.”
- **Fact sheet:** “Facts and figures.”
- **Worksheet:** “My views on housing issues.”
- Scratch paper and pencils.
- Assessment rubric.
- Contact information for your elected official(s).

Lesson plan

In this lesson, students will learn about advocacy through their reading and class discussion. They will put their new knowledge into practice by writing a message to a politician about the importance of decent, affordable housing.

■ Preparation:

Before beginning the lesson:

- Review the action item called “Ask your legislator to make housing a priority” found on the “Take action now” page of the Habitat for Humanity site: http://www.habitat.org/gov/take_action.
- Find and record a local representative’s or official’s contact information. If possible, select an official who has had experience with housing legislation.
- Contact your local Habitat for Humanity by visiting <http://www.habitat.org/cd/local/>. Ask if a member of the organization would be available to give some guidance to your students during the advocacy message writing process.

■ Procedure:

Day 1 Introduce the topic of advocacy.

1. Read “Advocacy: Frequently asked questions.”

- Tell students that these are frequently asked questions about advocacy. Explain that Habitat for Humanity, like many organizations, depends on advocates to make real change possible. Habitat urges Congress to make sure decent, affordable housing is available for everyone. It asks Congress to pass laws that keep landlords and banks from cheating poor people out of the little money they have. It asks the government to support volunteer programs like Habitat. They ask the government to help in their efforts to transform neighborhoods and communities. Habitat for Humanity has a motto: “Everyone should have a safe and affordable place to live.” It needs the government’s help to achieve this goal.

- Make sure students understand that true advocacy is more than spreading awareness about an issue. Ask them how they would feel if they were told that the cafeteria was thinking of serving gray gruel for lunch, but they were never told about ways they could stop it from happening. Students might respond that they would feel helpless. Explain that this is how the public and officials feel when they are not given a clear and specific way to take action.

2. Introduce the decent, affordable housing message project.

Tell students that they will be writing a one-paragraph message expressing their view on a housing issue. The audience for their message is the elected official(s) in your area you investigated prior to the lesson. Describe the official and his or her work with housing issues. Summarize the action item called “Ask your legislators to make housing a priority” from the “Take action now” Web page. Explain that students’ paragraphs will be in support of such a measure. Tell students that their messages will be collected and sent to the official in the form of a booklet.

3. Review the fact sheet.

- Distribute the fact sheet “Facts and figures” to students. Read it together. Define the term *poverty line* (the least amount of income a family can make and still take care of basic needs). Although students will use the facts verbatim within their letters, you might want to help students better comprehend the statistics listed by creating a pie chart or graph on the board.
- Explain that students may use facts from this sheet to support their arguments in their housing messages. Guide students to determining how and when to use such facts.

4. Students begin to draft their messages.

- Distribute the scratch paper and pencils to students. Tell them that they will now start writing their drafts.
- Write the following questions on the board to guide students in writing their messages:
 1. What problems do we have with housing in the United States?
 2. Who is affected by these problems?
 3. How can we solve those problems?

The answers to these questions should appear in the message.

Day 2 Students revise and edit their messages.

1. Students finish their drafts.

Allow students time to complete their drafts.

2. Students engage in peer review.

- Have students meet with partners for peer review. Have writers read their paragraphs aloud. Have peer reviewers indicate the best thing about the paragraph and one way the paragraph might be improved.
- Allow students to make corrections to their messages.

3. Contact your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

According to the arrangements you made beforehand, e-mail a few samples to your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate or invite a representative to visit the class on this day. The representative can review a few of the student messages to check for consistency and accuracy of argument and provide any further guidance with the advocacy process.

4. Students write their final paragraphs and create the booklet.

- Distribute the “My views on housing issues” worksheet to students. Students should write their messages as neatly as possible on the worksheet.
- Collect final drafts and bind them together into a booklet. Ask a volunteer to create a cover design.
- Send the booklet to your local official.

■ Assessment:

Use the rubric on Page 6 to score student paragraphs and performance.

■ Optional extension:

Get others involved.

Copy and distribute the Habitat for Humanity appeal letter attached to this lesson. Encourage students to share the letter with their families, neighbors and other community members. Have students ask these individuals to show their support for Habitat’s mission by signing and sending the letter to a local official.

Advocacy: Frequently asked questions

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is making change. It is changing systems, policies or ways of doing things, as well as attitudes.

What is an advocate?

An advocate is someone who helps to make this change.

How is advocacy different from educating others?

Advocates do educate people. They give information to people about important issues. But their work does not end there. Advocates must ask people to do something, to take action. Advocates can be most successful when they are clear and specific about what they want people to do.

What types of things do advocates do?

Depending on the issue, advocates might do different things. They might write letters to their representatives, senators or the president about passing laws that guarantee equal access to affordable housing. For example, an advocate might say, “Mr. President, please support \$5 billion in 2009 to help families in poverty.” Advocates might also pledge their support by signing a petition. A petition is a document that states a request. People sign the petition to say that they support the request.

Who can be an advocate?

Anyone can be an advocate. Habitat for Humanity has advocates as young as 5 years old who speak up for housing issues.

Why does Habitat for Humanity participate in advocacy? Can't they just keep building more houses?

Like many organizations, Habitat for Humanity has big goals. It wants to put an end to poverty housing and homelessness around the world. It cannot do this simply by building more houses. According to the United Nations, there are more than 100 million people without homes today. Even more people live in unsafe and unhealthy homes. If Habitat for Humanity simply built more homes, it would need to build 2 million homes for the next 50 years to solve the problem. But the

problem gets worse every year, so even after 50 years the organization's work would not be done. An estimated 1 billion more houses would have to be built after that. Habitat for Humanity is trying to focus on what causes housing to be too expensive, unsafe or unfit for people in order to help solve the problem of poverty housing.

What are some advocacy events students take part in to support Habitat for Humanity's goals?

Students do many different things to advocate for Habitat for Humanity. Many students take part in a special week once a year called Act! Speak! Build! Week. During this week, students organize events to educate others about housing issues and ask them for support in the cause. They might hold a candlelight vigil, put on a play, or create a display with photos and videos. Students can come up with great ideas on their own, too. They just need to organize themselves to make sure their message comes across clearly.

What are some tips for success in advocating an issue?

Do your research. Make sure you are informed about the issues before you inform others. In the case of Habitat for Humanity, it is helpful to contact the local affiliate of the organization to get the most up-to-date and correct information.

As said earlier, you will want to include an “ask” within your advocacy event or action. You want to be specific about what you need the public to do or what you are asking from your legislatures.

Ask classmates, friends and family to join you in your efforts. This way you will be able to make a greater impact and achieve your goals. Make sure to thank people for their support.

Be organized. Whether you're planning a large event or a small one, it is important to be organized. All participants should know what they are doing and when. Also, be prepared for the unexpected. For example, have extra copies of handouts or fliers on hand just in case more people come to your event than planned.

Fact sheet: Facts and figures

U.S. poverty facts

About 13 percent of the people living in the United States live below the poverty line. This means that they make less than \$19,157 for a family of four people.

Twenty percent of all jobs pay below the poverty line.

About 7.6 million families and 35.9 million people live in poverty. The number of people living in poverty has risen 4.3 million since the year 2000.

About 12.9 million children live in poverty. About 19.4 million people between the ages of 18 and 64 live in poverty. About 3.6 million people over the age of 65 live in poverty.

Housing facts

About one-third of the people in the United States, or 95 million, face housing problems. Of that group, one-third spends more than 30 percent of income on housing and 13 percent spend more than 50 percent on housing. An additional 2 million live in unsafe and poorly constructed homes, and 6.2 million live in crowded conditions.

Half of low-income households spend 50 percent of their income on housing. Both rental and mortgage costs are rising faster than incomes.

Of the 200 U.S. counties with the highest poverty rates, 189 are rural. Thirty percent, or 6.2 million people, living in rural areas have housing problems.

About 75 percent of those people in need of housing help are not being served by governmental housing programs at this time.

Habitat for Humanity facts

Habitat has built more than 350,000 houses around the world. In doing so, more than 1.75 million people in more than 3,000 communities have safe and affordable housing.

Habitat operates through more than 1,500 affiliates in the United States and is active in nearly 90 countries around the world.

Habitat's "Build Louder" advocacy campaign has supported several initiatives to support low-income housing efforts. More than 25,000 Habitat advocates contacted their U.S. congressional representatives in 2009 to support the Serve America Act.

U.S. homeowner families complete between 200 and 500 sweat-equity hours.

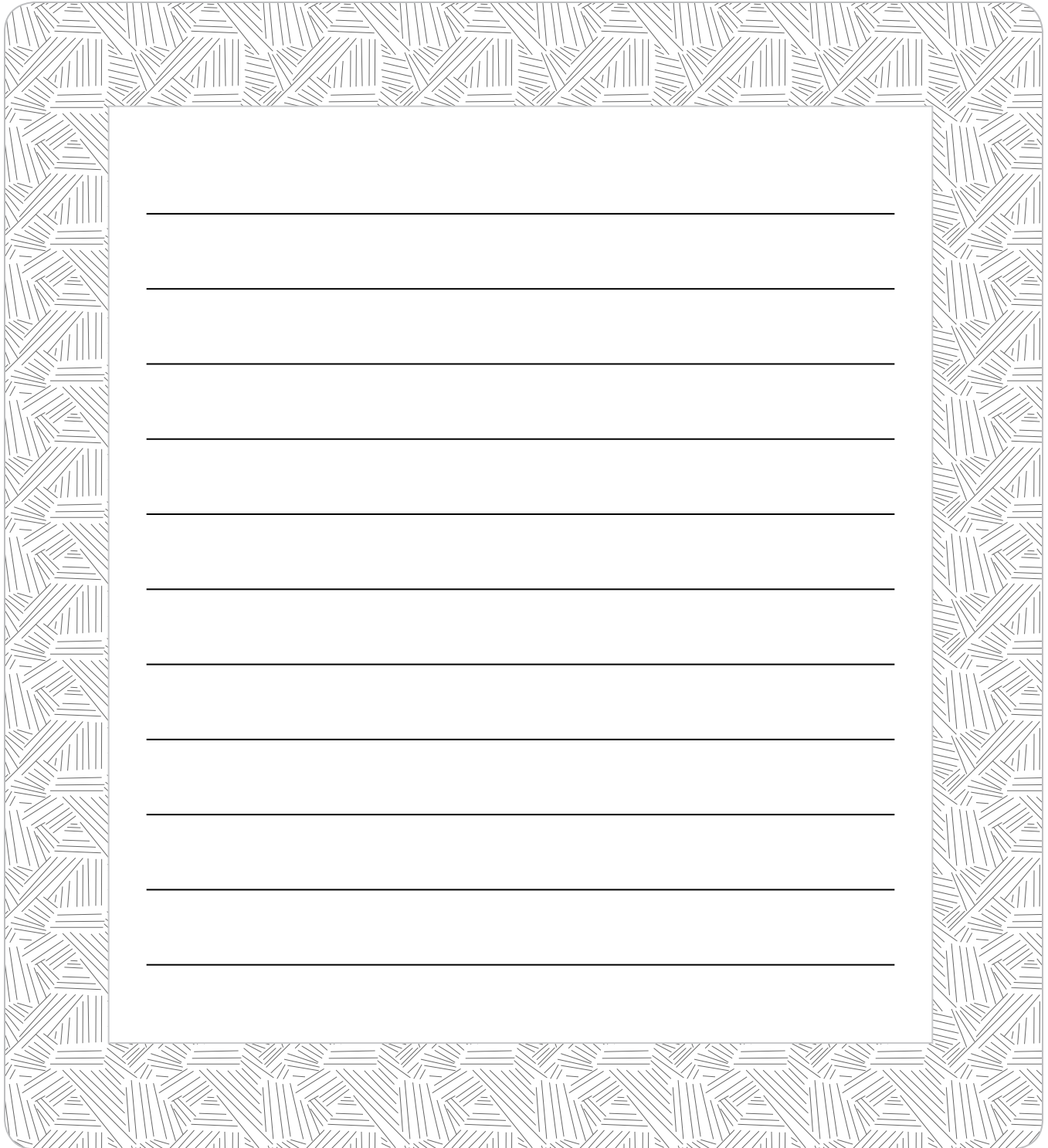
Habitat's goal is to serve 100,000 families annually by 2013.

Habitat was ranked as the largest private homebuilder in the United States, and the 11th largest overall, according to Builder Magazine's 2008 Builder Top 100 list.

Habitat was ranked as the 14th largest nonprofit organization by the Chronicle of Philanthropy in 2008.

(Additional facts and sources notes available at www.habitat.org/how/why.)

My views on housing



A large rectangular area with a decorative geometric border. The border consists of a repeating pattern of interlocking triangles and lines. Inside the border, there are ten horizontal lines for writing, spaced evenly down the page.

Rubric: Housing messages

Use the rubric below to assess student paragraphs.

	5	4	3	2	1
Paragraph content	Paragraph indicates in-depth understanding of the issues and shows original thought and opinion.	Paragraph indicates understanding of the issues and shows original thought.	Paragraph indicates some understanding of the issues and shows some original thought.	Paragraph indicates little understanding of the issues and shows little original thought.	Paragraph indicates no understanding of the issues and shows no original thought, or student does not complete paragraph.
Paragraph organization	Paragraph contains a strong topic sentence and more than two specific supporting sentences.	Paragraph contains a clear topic sentence and at least two specific supporting sentences.	Paragraph contains a topic sentence and at least two supporting sentences.	Paragraph contains loosely connected ideas.	Paragraph does not contain a topic sentence and shows no organization, or student does not complete paragraph.
Paragraph accuracy	Paragraph contains no errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.	Paragraph contains minor errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.	Paragraph contains a few major errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.	Paragraph contains many errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.	Paragraph shows little to no understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar rules.



Dear _____,

Now more than ever, affordable homeownership programs are vital. These programs are just the safety nets families need to help keep them off the streets. Please act now to ensure that more, not fewer, American families have a chance at safe, decent and affordable housing.

I join Habitat for Humanity in asking you to make a smart investment in the promise of affordable, secure housing for vulnerable American families. Today, more than 95 million Americans suffer from housing problems. As the economic crisis reaches its height, more and more families looking for the financing to buy a home will be left out in the cold.

Investment in safe, secure housing for families fosters safer and more active communities; improves the health and education of children; and provides an opportunity for parents to create long-term financial security. In short, clean, stable and decent homes have the power to help low-income families lift themselves—and their communities—out of poverty.

I know that you care about this issue. Yet with the budgetary strain on many government programs, I am asking that you please make sure affordable homeownership programs continue for American families who need them most.

Thank you for making housing a priority.

Sincerely,
