

Below Level Differentiation

■ Reading and Discussion Tips:

- Have students create a graphic organizer, such as a multi-columned chart, to keep track of the information shared at the beginning of the lesson. You may also want to display the housing advocacy information on an overhead projector so students can follow along and take notes.

■ Activity Tips:

- You may want to show students examples of congressional testimonies to provide more background information. You can conduct a simple search under “congressional testimony” on YouTube to find an assortment of recorded testimonies. Choose one related to education, the environment, or another appropriate topic, and show students a short clip after you have previewed it.
- Take a moment to investigate one of the assigned topics together in class. Explain any terminology that might create comprehension problems. Have students paraphrase the main idea of the policy.
- As a class, brainstorm a list of ways to capture the audience’s attention during an introduction. Write the list on the board and allow students to use it as a reference during the drafting stage of the project.
- You may wish to review students’ testimony drafts briefly during individual conferences to ensure that students are on the right track.
- To help students generate counter-arguments, take a moment to model doing so with a familiar subject, such as a school policy. As you propose counter-arguments, describe your thought process so students understand how you arrived at such arguments.

■ Assessment Tips:

- Do not penalize students for using notes during their presentations.

■ Optional Extension Tips:

- Encourage students to draft their poster ideas and create a plan on a separate sheet of paper before beginning to construct their posters.

Above Level Differentiation

■ Reading and Discussion Tips:

- Have students conduct research to investigate the history of Habitat for Humanity’s work in public policy. Ask students to share their findings with the class.
- Ask students to analyze how Habitat for Humanity’s goal to change or create fair housing policies relates to the organization’s general mission. Have them write a short response after conducting preliminary research.

■ Activity Tips:

- You may have students investigate the various policies on their own while the remainder of the class takes a closer look at a single topic.
- Encourage above-level students to take on leadership roles in their groups. You may also choose to assign leadership roles to them. Students may also work individually if they have shown an interest in a particular topic.
- Invite students to investigate the most recent initiatives related to their policy. What actions is Habitat for Humanity currently taking regarding the policy? How is the public involved? Ask students to incorporate their findings into their testimonies.

■ Assessment Tips:

- If students have chosen to work individually, have them submit their notes and research as evidence of their work habits to replace the “Group Work” section on the rubric.

■ Optional Extension Tips:

- Encourage students to create a multi-media presentation rather than a poster. For example, students might create a slide-show presentation or a video. Invite students to contact their local library or community center about arranging to show the presentation to the public. They might also offer to send the presentation to your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

Grades 9–12

Objectives

Students will:

- learn the importance of advocacy.
- analyze the programs and policies Habitat for Humanity is currently supporting.
- write and present mock testimonies for one of the programs or policies.

Educational Standards

Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts

- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

National Social Studies Standards

- Apply ideas, theories, and modes of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to inform and evaluate actions concerning public policy issues.
- Propose, compare, and evaluate alternative policies for the use of land and other resources in communities, regions, nations, and the world.
- Analyze the extent to which groups and institutions meet individual needs and promote the common good in contemporary and historical settings.
- Prepare a public policy paper and present and defend it before an appropriate forum in school or community.
- Analyze or formulate policy statements demonstrating an understanding of concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

Scope

- 4 class periods (45 minutes each)

Materials

- **Worksheet:** Drafting Your Testimony
- **Worksheet:** Testimony Analysis
- **Teacher Resource:** Testimony Rubric

Lesson Plan

In this lesson, students will learn about how Habitat for Humanity proposes and supports legislative efforts that affect poverty housing. Students will draft and present a mock testimony before a panel.

■ Preparation:

Before beginning the lesson:

- Invite a few faculty members or, if possible, staff members from your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate to act as a mock congressional panel on Day 4 of the lesson. You can find your local affiliate contact information by visiting this link: <http://www.habitat.org/local>.
- Make copies of the worksheets for students.
- Visit http://www.habitat.org/gov/take_action/default.aspx and http://www.habitat.org/gov/public_policy/. Write down the policies that are currently of interest to Habitat for Humanity. You will be assigning one policy for further investigation to each small group of students in the class.
- Arrange for students to use the computer lab for three class periods.

■ Procedure:

Day 1 Discuss the topic of advocating for safe, affordable housing policies. Assign testimony topics.

1. Introduce the topic of housing advocacy.

- Share the following quote from Habitat for Humanity's web page:

To reach the goal of safe, decent, and affordable housing for all, we need to change systems, attitudes, policies and institutional behaviors that lead to inadequate housing and homelessness.

- Explain to students that humanitarian organizations often need to go above and beyond acts of charity in order to truly attain their goals. Simply building more houses would never solve the problem of worldwide poverty housing. Because the United States government spends public funds on community development and foreign aid, Habitat for Humanity can testify before elected officials for more effective and just policies. As experts in housing and community development with projects around the world, the organization can offer unique insights and guidance to policymakers in these areas.
- Share with students a few general areas of interest to Habitat for Humanity in regards to policymaking:
 - *Neighborhood revitalization* – Homes around the country are affected by disaster, economic turmoil, and neglect. Congress can help organizations like Habitat reclaim and renew vacant properties.
 - *Social protection and self-empowerment* – Habitat supports legislation that makes housing available for at-risk populations. They fight for programs to keep loans affordable and homeownership attainable for the economically disadvantaged.
 - *Disaster relief* – In underdeveloped areas damaged by disaster, housing is among the first orders of business. Habitat advocates would like to direct disaster relief funding toward housing, and they offer expertise on construction and other technical issues.
 - *Smart foreign aid* – By increasing foreign aid’s focus on affordable housing, Habitat can help develop lasting infrastructure, building the conditions for self-empowerment.

2. Introduce the mock testimony assignment.

- Explain to students that in small groups they will be writing and presenting a mock testimony regarding one of the policies currently of interest to Habitat for Humanity. Students will conduct research on the policy and formulate a convincing argument to either support or propose changes to the policy, according to Habitat’s current calls to action. Explain to students that other faculty members or staff members from a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate will act as a panel of “representatives” and evaluate their

testimonies. They will decide which testimony was the most effective in influencing their opinions on the topic.

- Tell students that they should include the following components in their testimonies:
 - a brief and attention-getting introduction
 - three to five reasons why the policy should be supported or changed
 - factual evidence that supports these reasons
 - an effective conclusion
- Share the “Testimony Rubric” with students so they are aware of all of the assignment’s expectations. Each member of the small group will be responsible for presenting a portion of the testimony.
- Assign students to small groups and give each group one of the current policies you recorded before beginning the lesson.
- Allow students the remainder of the class period to conduct research regarding their policy topic. Direct them to the information and links found at <http://www.habitat.org/gov/default.aspx> to get started. Students should investigate the special reports and statistical information regarding poverty housing on other pages of the Habitat site as well as those listed as resources on http://www.habitat.org/gov/public_policy/public_policy.aspx.

Days 2 and 3 **Students research and write their testimonies.**

1. Allow students these class periods to conduct research and draft their testimonies.

- Distribute the “Drafting Your Testimony” worksheet. Students should answer the questions to help them plan an effective presentation.
- Tell students that they will be expected to answer questions from the panel of representatives at the conclusion of their testimonies. Students should investigate oppositional arguments to their topic to prepare themselves effectively.
- As students begin to practice their presentations, advise them to think creatively and strategically about speaking assignments or roles and the order of the speakers.

Day 4 Students present their testimonies.

- 1. Introduce the members of the panel.**
- 2. Distribute the worksheet “Testimony Analysis” to students.**
 - Have students complete the worksheet while listening to the presentations. At the end of class, collect the worksheets and assign participation points based on their accuracy and completeness.
- 3. Have students present their testimonies.**
- 4. Ask the panel to announce the testimony they found most convincing.**
 - Have the panel explain to the class why the presentation was so effective.

■ **Assessment:**

Evaluate students’ presentations according to the testimony rubric on page 8.

■ **Optional Extension:**

Have students create posters based on the information presented in their testimonies. Encourage students to add images and other design elements to help portray the meaning of their argument on the poster. Ask students to include a way people can take action and support their policy (such as visiting the Habitat for Humanity “Take action now” page at http://www.habitat.org/gov/take_action/default.aspx to email government officials). Display posters in a common area of your school.

Drafting Your Testimony

Directions: Answer the following questions to help you draft your testimony.

1. Who will benefit directly from the policy (or the changes to it)? How?

2. How will this policy (or the changes to it) affect the general public?

3. Summarize each of your supporting arguments in one sentence. Write them in order from strongest to weakest.

4. Can you add details or more research to make the weaker arguments stronger? If so, what?

5. Do the weakest arguments threaten the strength of the overall argument? If so, can you eliminate them and still present all the information?

6. You may want to consider starting your testimony with your second-strongest argument and ending it with your strongest. What order of your arguments do you think will make the most impact?

7. Are there any opposing arguments directed toward your policy?

8. What evidence can you use to refute those arguments?

9. What details from your research can you use to grab the panel's attention?

10. What can you say in your conclusion that will resonate most with the panel?

Testimony Analysis

Group Name: _____

1. What policy was the group advocating? _____

2. What was the group's most convincing argument? Why?

3. What was the group's least convincing argument? Why?

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WORDS OF ACTION

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Testimony Rubric

	Exceeds Expectation (4)	Meets Expectation (3)	Partly Meets Expectation (2)	Fails to Meet Expectation (1)
Testimony Introduction	Introduction is extremely effective in capturing the audience's attention.	Introduction is moderately effective in capturing the audience's attention.	Introduction is clear but not very effective in capturing the audience's attention.	Introduction is incomplete or not clearly stated.
Strength of Argument	Argument is very convincing and well-supported.	Argument is convincing and supported adequately.	Argument is not very convincing and lacks support.	Argument is incomplete and unsupported.
Accuracy of Information	All information is well-researched and accurate.	Most of the information is well-researched and accurate.	Some of the information is accurate.	Little to none of the information is accurate.
Organization and Coherence	Content is arranged in a highly logical order with strong attention paid to sense and persuasive techniques.	Content is arranged in a logical order with attention paid to sense and persuasive techniques.	Content is arranged in an order that is, at points, illogical. Little attention is paid to sense and persuasive techniques.	Content is not arranged in a logical order. No attempt has been made in terms of sense and persuasion.
Delivery Style	Delivery is confident, clear, and engaging. Student shows high awareness of audience.	Delivery is clear and engaging.	Delivery is clear, but student cannot maintain the audience's attention.	Student shows little interest in the presentation.
Group Work and Cooperation	Student takes a highly active role in the research, drafting, and presentation stages of the assignment.	Student takes an active role in the research, drafting, and presentation stages of the assignment.	Student's participation in the research, drafting, and presentation stages of the assignment is limited.	Student shows little interest, does not cooperate with group members, or does not participate in group work.