

Fair Housing Month Poster Competition Classroom Resource



Fair Housing Act Background,
Classroom Discussion Prompts &
Activities



Introduction

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon holds an annual poster competition in March for 1st-8th grade students to celebrate Fair Housing Month. The intention of the poster contest is to increase awareness among young Oregonians of their right to equal housing opportunity. Federal, state and local laws prohibit discrimination based on protected class:

Protected Classes

- race
- color
- religion
- national origin
- sex
- familial status
- disability
- source of income
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- gender identity

As we all fall into at least some of these categories, fair housing laws protect all of us from illegal housing discrimination. To learn more about how to enter the Fair Housing Council of Oregon poster competition, visit <https://fhco.org/poster-competition/>.



Background

Teachers may wish to introduce the concepts of fair housing and diverse neighborhoods as part of a historical lesson on the civil rights movement. We celebrate the achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 17th, this year. This is a good opportunity for students to reflect on the message of this civil rights leader and to think about how the life of this man has affected their lives, their homes and neighborhoods.

The history of The Fair Housing Act is part of the history of the civil rights movement in this country.

Resources to provide background on The Fair Housing Act

- Visit <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Fair-Housing-Act/632867> to access a historical overview for grades 1st-8th
- Visit <https://kids.britannica.com/scholars/article/Fair-Housing-Act/605790> to access a historical overview for teachers and parents.
- Teachers can show this bilingual video of a fair housing story entitled “The Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House” to provide context for elementary school students around fair housing concepts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ-cYrnqZnk>



Congress passed and President Lyndon Johnson signed the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act) on April 11, 1968 just 7 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.

Lecture

The instructor should give the history of the enactment of the federal Fair Housing Act and explain the relationship between discrimination, diversity, and the federal Fair Housing Act.

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, girl, nonbinary or another gender identity), people living with a disability, people with children (also known as familial status) which includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal guardians and people who are pregnant.

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

Activities and Discussion Topics



Activity/Discussion 1 Grades 6th-8th

Write “discrimination,” “culture,” and “tolerance” on the board. Get the students’ definition for each of the words. Then write these definitions on the board next to the words:

- **Discrimination**-is unfair treatment of one particular person or group of people. Usually the different treatment is because of the person’s sex, religion, nationality, ethnicity (culture), race, or other personal traits. Discrimination based on race is called racism.
- **Culture**-is a pattern of behavior shared by a society, or group of people. Many different things make up a society’s culture. These things include food, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion.
- **Tolerance**-willingness to accept or respect what is different in others, especially their beliefs and customs.

Ask students to think about each of these words then open it up for a class discussion.

Ask students to think of different cultures that exist in the US. Write them down on the board. Ask the following questions to engage the class in a discussion

- What makes these cultures different from each other?
- How are they the same?
- Other than culture, what ways do people discriminate against each other?

Activity/Discussion 2 Grades 1st-6th

Ask students the questions below to engage the class in a discussion on inclusive communities.

- What makes you feel safe and welcome in a neighborhood?
- What makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome in a neighborhood?
- How can we make everyone feel safe and welcome in a neighborhood?

Activity/Discussion 3 Grades 3rd-8th

Ask students to stand up if they eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

- State that everyone who is standing has to eat their lunch outside, in the parking lot. State that everyone else can eat anywhere they want.
- Ask them "How do you feel"? Both the people sitting and standing.
- Explain that during the activity, the people who eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches experienced discrimination.

Ask—How would you feel if someone told you that you could not live in a neighborhood, house/apartment or go to a certain school because of:

- The fact that you don’t speak the same language
- You don't belong to the dominant religion
- You don’t have the same customs, traditions, look or dress as the dominant culture
- Because of the color of your skin
- Because your parents aren’t married
- Your brother uses a wheelchair and wheelchairs aren’t allowed in the building

Activities and Discussion Topics

Activity/Discussion 4 Grades 6th-8th

Ask students the questions below to engage the class in a discussion on inclusive communities

- Why is it good to live in a diverse community?
- What are some challenges people face in diverse communities?
- What can people do to address these challenges and improve their neighborhoods?

Activity/Discussion 5 Grades 1st-8th

Ask students the questions below to engage the class in a discussion on inclusive communities

- Imagine you have new next-door neighbors. What would you do to make them feel welcome?
- What would you not do?
- What if the new neighbors were different from you in some way?

Activity/Discussion 6 Grades 6th-8th

Ask students the questions below to engage the class in a discussion on diversity and tolerance.

- If you were a landlord, what kind of people would you want living in your apartment building?
- Who would you not want to live in your apartment building?
- How would you choose who could live there and who couldn't?
- What would be some legal ways to distinguish between applicants? What would be illegal?

Activity/Discussion 7 Grades 6th-8th

Show the fair housing public service announcement (PSA) "Anthony" and have an open discussion about the PSA by using the following questions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5yXQWUTH_0

- What happened when Anthony's family went to see the apartment?
- Was the landlords behavior legal?
- Why does the video say to "call HUD" if discrimination has occurred?

*The instructor should use the Anthony PSA as a building block to explain the significance of the federal Fair Housing Act and how it is unlawful to treat people differently when trying to buy, rent, or sell a home based upon the seven protected classes.

The instructor should focus on the following concepts:

- Explain how unfair treatment occurs in real-estate related transactions.
- Explain how unfair treatment is a violation of the federal Fair Housing Act.
- Identify and explain what federal agency is responsible for the enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act.

Please refer all questions to the Education and Outreach Department at The Fair Housing Council of Oregon at information@fhco.org

To learn more about entering your students' submissions into the annual Fair Housing Council of Oregon Poster Competition visit: <https://fhco.org/poster-competition/>

