

# Lesson Plan

## Solidarity and Poverty Awareness

### INTRODUCTION

A major barrier to solidarity with persons struggling in poverty is an unrealistic view of what it means to deal daily with the burdens of poverty.

TIME: Two Class Periods

### OBJECTIVES:

- Students will uncover societal factors that cause poverty.
- Students will gain a realistic perspective about balancing a family budget.

### MATERIALS:

- Classroom access to view the USCCB's *Poverty USA* website
- One copy per student of the *Causes of Poverty* handout
- One copy per student of the *Solidarity and Poverty Awareness: Let's do the math* Assignment handout
- One copy per student of the Family Housing Fund's factsheet: *Working Doesn't Always Pay for a Home*
- Individual student access to internet websites with information to complete a family budget sheet
- Calculators

### PREPERATION:

1. Introduce the class to basic statistics and information about poverty by visiting the USCCB's *Poverty USA* Website <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/>
  - Do the *Poverty Quiz*
  - View the *Poverty Tour*
2. Small group discussion:
  - Why do families end up struggling in poverty?  
List as many causes of poverty in the U.S. as possible.
3. Have small groups report back to create a master list.
4. Distribute the *Causes of Poverty* handout. Discuss:
  - Which factors were identified through the small groups and which were not.
  - Did the small groups identify factors not on the handout? If so, add them.
  - Consider various reasons why certain factors were not identified by the small groups. Were more personal factors identified than societal or "systemic" factors?  
Highlight the point that our society tends to emphasize the personal factors contributing to poverty and overlook the social factors. Those of us who have not personally struggled with poverty may minimize the toll poverty takes on family life and health.
  - Consider how negative stereotypes associated with poverty prevent the wider society from being in solidarity with persons struggling in poverty.

5. Instructions: To help us develop solidarity with persons struggling in poverty, we will explore how much it costs to survive in the U.S. economy.
  - Distribute One copy per student of the *Solidarity and Poverty Awareness: Do the math* handout
  - Distribute One copy per student of the Family Housing Fund's factsheet: *Working Doesn't Always Pay for a Home* [http://www.fhfund.org/\\_dnld/fact%20sheets/Working\\_06.pdf](http://www.fhfund.org/_dnld/fact%20sheets/Working_06.pdf)
  - Pair students up and assign each group with a different careers variables. Suggested sources:
    - *Working Doesn't Always Pay for a Home*, page 5
    - Suggest Executive PayWatch website <http://www.aflcio.org/corporatewatch/paywatch/ceou/database.cfm?tkr=TGT&pg=4>
    - For current minimum wage laws see United States Department of Labor - Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) <http://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/index.htm>
  - Direct students to complete the family budget for all three scenarios.
  
6. Class discussion:
  - What did we learn in this activity about the challenges facing people struggling in poverty?
  - Imagine and describe how the stresses of poverty affect a person's health and wellbeing.
  - What more would you like to know about struggling in poverty in the U.S.?
  - How can U.S. society be more in solidarity with people struggling in poverty?