

Ten Chairs

Grades 7-12

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Time

30 Minutes

Materials Needed

Ten chairs (without arms), scenario cards.

Objective

Students will gain awareness of the range and disparity of income in New England.

Procedure

- Ask students to help line up ten chairs across the front of the room, facing participants, prior to the start of the activity.
- Have ten students volunteer to sit in the chairs. Explain that each chair represents 10% of all income in New England. If income were distributed evenly each person is sitting on/earning \$74,000 a year- the median income for New England in 2004.
- Pass out the scenario cards to students sitting on the chairs, in order of #1-10 left to right.
- Ask the student sitting in the line of chairs, holding Card 1 to read their card description aloud. Have them stretch out on the appropriate amount of chairs their income represents. (*see attachments*)
- Continue with the remaining scenario cards until all ten households have been read and acted out. Each time a card is read have students readjust themselves accordingly. Refer to the Households-to-Chairs chart for each scenario's correlation to a number of seats.
- While everyone is still sitting- ask participants (including other students who are not sitting in the ten chairs, but witnessing) to notice the circumstances they are in and their own feelings about this. This is a moment to pause and reflect, before regrouping comfortably to discuss:
 - How are you feeling (at the top/bottom?)
 - Do you feel the same way when you look down at the opposite end of the row?
 - If you were going to push someone off the chairs to make room, who would it be? Why?
 - What questions do you have?
 - What surprised you about this activity?
- This activity can be done with or without representing the Top %5 of income earners. If you'd like to include this top 5%, at the end of cards 1-10 being read have a student from the group who is witnessing, come and sit on 5 of the 10 chairs, and everyone else readjust accordingly.

Possible Actions

- Create a fund drive- *see list of fundraising ideas* – or contact The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts for information & resources.
- Host a food drive i.e. peanut butter drive or canned tuna drive.

MA DOE STANDARDS

MATHEMATICS

Ratios and Proportional Relationships

(Grade 7) 7RP Analyze proportional relationships and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems

Expressions and Equations

(Grade 7) 7EE Solve real-life and mathematical problems using numerical and algebraic expressions and equations

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH

Mental Health

5.19 Explain positive techniques for handling difficult decisions

Consumer Health and Resource Management

12.9 Describe the decision-making process when planning a budget to save money for a special purpose

HISTORY & SOCIAL SCIENCE

Economics

(Grade 12) E.1.9 Use a production possibilities curve to explain the concepts of choice, scarcity, opportunity cost, tradeoffs, unemployment, productivity, and growth.

Teacher's Reference Sheet

The *Ten Chairs* activity was adapted from United for a Fair Economy. Below is a chart showing the number of chairs for each of the ten household scenarios included in this activity:

Income	% of Total Income for western MA	# of Chairs	Household Scenarios
220,000	31%	3	1
150,000	21%	2	2
95,000	13%	1 ½	3
70,000	9.9%	1	4
60,000	8.5%	1	5
45,000	6.3%	$\frac{3}{4}$	6
27,000	3.8%	$\frac{1}{4}$	7
25,000	3.8%	$\frac{1}{4}$	8
17,000	2.4%	$\frac{1}{8}$	9
10,000	1.4%	$\frac{1}{8}$	10

The following chart, showing income quintiles for New England in 2004, is taken from a report titled *Changes in Income Distribution in New England* published by the University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute in 2007.

Quintiles for New England	Average Household Income	Estimated Range of Pay	% of Total Wealth	# of chairs
Lowest-Income Quintile	12,437	0-19,999	3	.25
Quintile 2	34,291	20,000- 39,999	9	.75
Quintile 3	57,310	40,000- 64,999	16	1.5
Quintile 4	87,043	65,000-99,999	24	2.5
Highest-Income Quintile	184,828	100,000+	50	5
<i>Top 5 percent</i>	<i>336,819</i>	-	-	-
Total Q1-Q5	370,000	-	100	10