

Talkin' Trash

Recycling Activity

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OBJECTIVE:

Reinforce and clarify some options for managing our solid waste.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 30 students

GRADE LEVEL:

1st -6th

TIME:

20 minutes

(-may be reduced to 10 minutes with practice and using option where kids rebuild the illegal dump at the end)

(-may be expanded with discussion of problems of illegal dumping or by inclusion of ambiguous trash items)

LAYOUT:

[See Attached Diagram below](#)

MATERIALS:

recycling boxes with big labels (see [List 1](#))

3 plastic tarps (black, green, blue)

selected (clean!) trash items (see [List 2](#))

[diagram of a landfill](#)

PREPARATION:

Make big labels for recycling stations (boxes).

Set out tarps as shown.

Draw yellow dashed chalk line down center of "road" on black tarp.

Set recycling stations in semi-circle around tarps.

Put sample trash items in each recycling box.

Put rest of trash items in a big pile on green tarp (grass).

PROCEDURE:

1. "What is this black plastic supposed to be? -green? -blue?"

(-a road, -grass, -water or creek)

"Someone has dumped a bunch of trash here by the side of the road. We're going to clean it up."

2. "But first," (stand between trash and students) "where does your trash go?" "You have a full bag of trash in the kitchen....."

(Establish by questions - it goes out to the road. Trash hauler picks it up. We pay for getting rid of trash. It goes to a dump. No, a landfill. Show difference between a dump and a landfill: (a) liners and (b) covered daily.)

"You wouldn't put it at the side of the road like this." (Wink) "If you didn't put it at the side of the road, and you didn't want to send it to the landfill, what else could you do with some of it?" (-recycle)

3. "What can you recycle?" (Do this fast for older students, a little slower for younger. They or you point to boxes, as you mention items.)

glass (colored, clear)
aluminum cans
paper (Cardboard, school papers, newspaper)
scrap metal and cans
compost pile
garage sale or donation
eyeglasses to Lions Club
plastic (#1, #2)

"If it can't be recycled, take it to the landfill."

4. "OK, when I say "GO", everyone takes 1 (one) piece of trash and takes it somewhere. There may be more than one correct answer for some things. If you aren't sure, ask a friend or me or a teacher."
(Ask teacher to come help - it gets them involved, even though kids may not need help.) (If there is more than one item per student, they will clean it all up anyway, no matter what you say.)

5. "GO" (Allow a little chaos, but no fighting over items. Help wanderers who seem lost. Allow about 3 minutes.)

6. (Have them sit back down.) "Thanks for cleaning up that ugly dump. Did anyone have any trouble with anything?" (Discuss questions or ambiguous items briefly.)

7. OPTIONAL - to get ready for next group:

(Stoop down. Stage whisper.) "Don't tell your teacher. I'm going to ask you to do something illegal. I want you to make an illegal dump again. Get ONLY the thing you put away originally! Leave the rest in the boxes."

"Thanks! What a mess! I hope no one saw us."

(Let them go.) (You can discuss what's wrong with illegal dumping here, if you need a filler. Be sure to include groundwater pollution.)

EVALUATION:

Make a written list of trash items covered. Have students fill out where each could be disposed of.

ATTACHMENTS:

LIST 1: LABELED RECYCLING STATIONS

(This could be made locally relevant.)

Recycle Glass
Recycle Cardboard
Recycle Newspaper
Recycle Office Paper
Recycle #1 Plastic
Recycle #2 Plastic
Recycle Plastic Walmart Bags
Recycle Scrap Metal
Recycle Aluminum Cans
Eyeglasses for Lions Club
Resale / Donations
Compost Pile
Modern Landfill

LIST 2: SUGGESTED TRASH ITEMS

(1 or more of each, 1 or 2 per student)

newspaper
homework paper
cardboard (corrugated)
green glass (At the fair, I leave these in the boxes, not in the illegal dump, for safety.)
clear glass
plastic milk bottle
other #2 plastic container - big
plastic pop bottle
Walmart bag (#2) (can go to Walmart)
aluminum can
bag of grass clippings
bag of dead leaves
orange peel
carrot
eyeglasses in case
old T-shirt in good condition that appeals to kids
old unbroken toys
interesting safe scrap metal pieces
food cans
refrigerator (picture)
couch (picture)
paper plate
large candy wrapper
styrofoam cup (#6)
other plastics (#3, #4, #5)
disposable diaper
broken toys

LAYOUT

