

Sort Your Waste

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Even at young ages, students can start to help to reduce the amount of waste that we send to our landfills through proper sorting of classroom waste. Learning to properly separate recyclables from compost and landfill material can open up conversations about the ways in which our choices as humans impact our earth – and what we can do to take better care of it on a daily basis.

GRADES: ECE – 2nd Grade

INTENDED OUTCOMES: Head, Hands

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES:

- A collection of waste items (things that would go to the landfill, compost, and all types of recycling - paper, cardboard, glass, cans, foil)
- Bins for sorting (ideally that match the colors of the schools’ actual waste receptacles) or signs, etc. to help students distinguish between categories

Suggested steps and/or focus for each grade level*:

ECE/KINDERGARDEN:

- Collect examples of simple items (made from only one material) that commonly end up in the school or classroom waste bins (i.e. paper, glass bottles, soda cans, and plastic bags). Explain to students that when we some of the items that we “throw away” go in one bin, and some go into another.
- One way to introduce this concept is to start with idea that these items are made from different materials. (Paper comes from trees, glass comes from sand, plastic comes from oil, and aluminum and tin come from rocks in the ground.) If you have a visual (a piece of wood for paper, a jar of sand for glass, etc.) that can help students to make the connection.
- You can explain that these waste items can be made into new things – if we put them in the right bins!
- Using the sample waste items you’ve collected, have children practice sorting items into the correct waste bins based on what they are made of. You might even want to label the waste bins with images of a tree for paper, etc.

1st and 2nd GRADE:

- Deepen the conversation above by asking students what they like about the source material (i.e. trees, sand, etc.). You’re bound to get some good answers – especially about trees!
- Discuss what would happen if we used up all of that thing (i.e. trees, sand) in making the products that we use. Would they be sad? What affect would it have on our lives?
- Then explain that we can avoid doing this through Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling. Ask students to brainstorm examples of reducing and reusing (i.e. using the back of a sheet of paper,

switching to reusable containers instead of single-use plastic bags, etc.) and then practice sorting recyclables, compost, and landfill.

*For more detail on the grade-level focus for natural and social concepts and sense of place, please refer to the Guidelines.



TIPS AND TRICKS

- Collect recycling and waste in the days leading up to this so that you ensure you have a good variety and can clean out things like yogurt cups so reduce the “ick” factor.
- Young students like the connection that oil comes from dinosaurs! They understand that we can’t make any more oil if we use it all up, because we don’t have any more dinosaurs!
- You can also add to the discussion about why it’s important to sort our waste (and therefore send less to the landfill) by talking to students about landfills – that they take up space, pollute the environment, release green house gases, etc.



Relevant Standards

SC09-GR.P-S.3-GLE2, SC09-GR.KS.3-GLE1