

Trashed!
Recycling Lesson Plan: Grade 1

Activity One

NOTE: Prior to doing this activity, make arrangements with the school's building services manager to leave the trash in your classroom until the end of the day. You can avoid dealing with food waste, used tissues, etc., by setting up two trash cans—one for food and other unsanitary waste and the other for all other trash. During the day, ask children to use the appropriate container without an explanation. You can observe the food waste can and have its contents removed each day. The trash in the other can is what should be left and put in a bag to be examined by the class.

NOTE: The teacher may want to wear rubber gloves for this activity.

Ask the children to sit in a circle on the floor. Place newspaper on the floor in the middle of the circle. Put on the rubber gloves. Set the cans of collected classroom trash on the paper.

Say to the children:

This is some of the trash we have thrown away in our class. How much do you think it weighs? (Listen to children's estimates.)

What kinds of trash do you think we threw away?" (Record each idea on chart paper.)

Place a scale on the floor in the circle. Weigh the cans and compare with their predictions. Share the weight of the cans when they are empty. Ask the class: "When did the cans weigh more? Why?"

Explain why you are wearing rubber gloves (safety and health precautions) and share the fact that people in the waste disposal business would use them, too. Set aside the can with the unsanitary trash for collection later. Explain why the class will not be examining it.

Dump the trash from the other can onto part of the newspaper. Ask children to identify the kinds of things they threw away and why. (Point out that most classroom trash is made up of paper products.)

Together brainstorm ideas for what to do with some of the items instead of throwing them away. As children mention the terms "reuse" and "recycle," write them on index cards. Make another card with the word trash.

Talk about the meaning of each, then place the three cards on the empty half of the newspaper. Sort the trash as children offer their ideas. Correct, explain, and clarify as appropriate.

When all trash is sorted, discuss the following:

How many items can we reuse? How?

How many items can we recycle?

How many go into the trash? Why?

Which category has the most items now? Which had the most before we started?

How much do you think the trash pile weighs now? (Gather the trash in the bag, have several students estimate the weight, and place it on the scale. Compare the estimates with the actual weight.)

If we reuse and recycle these things, how will this help the Earth and its natural resources?

Refer again to the chart "Caring For Our Earth" developed by the class in learning experience one. Ask the children:

Were we following any of these good habits when we threw all this trash away?

Are there some habits on our list that we could follow now in our classroom?

Can you suggest other good habits to follow that will show that we care for the Earth? (Add different ideas.)

Say to the class:

Sorting the objects by the categories of reuse, recycle, and trash is one way to make a graph. How could we represent these items in a graph without using the real items? (Symbols and other ideas. You could have the students form pairs, select an item, discuss a symbol, and share with class. Consider providing time for them to actually create a graph with these symbols.)

Ask:

Can you think of other ways to sort the trash? (Sort by type of trash. You could regroup the items by type and have children compare visual findings.)

Say to the class: "We have really examined our trash. But now what do we do with all of this? Should we throw it all away?" (Discuss. Children will propose a number of ideas, including using the trash for an informative bulletin board display. As a class vote on a way to handle the various trash and follow through.)

As an extension, you may wish to have the children make objects/craft projects with items in the reuse pile.

Interview the art teacher regarding re-using the materials in a creative way. Arrange for the art teacher to present multi-media ideas for the trash. Students could collect additional trash items and bring them to class to develop an art project.