

Recycling Activities – High School

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT MATERIALS

Pick a material that cannot go in the trash and write an in-depth research report on the material.

Potential materials:

1. Plastic bags
2. Batteries
3. Fluorescent Light Bulbs
4. Electronics
5. Books
6. Cell phones

Include in report:

- Description of material
- Life-cycle (how long are they used before needing disposal?)
- Why shouldn't the item go in the trash?
- How does recycling of the material work (what components are recycled, where can it be recycled locally, what is it recycled into?)
- Ideas on how to reuse / donate material other than just recycling
- What are the costs involved with disposing of the material? Who pays those costs?

Helpful Resources:

<http://www.ocrra.org/>

<http://earth911.com/>

<http://www.resource-recycling.com/>

Optional:

Have students present their findings to the class with visuals and examples. They may want to work in teams to divvy up the research.

PACKAGING

Allow students to pick an item that they (or their family) have recently purchased or that they regularly purchase.

Have them prepare research about the item in terms of its lifecycle and packaging. Have them answer the following questions:

- Think about the packaging for the item – is it recyclable? Reusable? Made of recycled content? Do you think it is necessary for the product? Do you have ideas on how it could be better?
- Now, think about the product. Will you use it for a long time? Is it designed to last? When you are done with it, what will you do with it? What is it made of? Is it recyclable? Reusable? Made of recycled content? Can you donate or resell it? Can you think of any “greener” alternatives to the product?

This exercise will help them understand the advantages and disadvantages of packaging material and teach them to look at the items they buy more critically.

CURRENT EVENTS IN TRASH

Have your students find a recent news article (last 6 months) that is related to trash or recycling that is not local (outside of Onondaga County).

Have them answer the following questions:

- What is the problem the article is talking about?
- Are there potential solutions offered? Can you think of your own?
- How is trash managed in your community and how does it compare to what is referenced in the article??

Findings can be presented to the class and discussed as a group. Try to relate discussion to what is going on locally. What are the similarities? Differences?

TEACH YOUR SCHOOL

As a class project or series of group projects, have the class create a slideshow / presentation / video about recycling to share with other classes or the whole school at an assembly.

- Decide on best method for the class (video, PowerPoint, etc.)
- Have students work out what they would like to teach – what do they want to get across to the other students?
 - Recycling rules
 - Addressing common mistakes when recycling
 - How it works in the school – classrooms, cafeteria, office
 - Any special projects to highlight
- Potential sources of information
 - OCRRA website (www.OCRRA.org)
 - School principal, school custodian
 - Survey other students – see what they think about the school’s recycling or test their knowledge, then report the results

SCHOOL SURVEY

How does recycling work in your school and how much knowledge does the school community have about it?

- Have students design a brief survey to find out more about the recycling habits and knowledge in the school.
 - This should consist of a few short questions (see examples below), some of which can have a right or wrong answer, and some of which can be open-ended
- Have them stop people in the halls between classes (or talk to people during lunch, etc.)
 - Ask questions of students, plus some teachers, custodians, office staff – anyone willing to participate
 - It can be anonymous or not – whatever works best
- Collect and record answers
- Write a brief article (for class assignment OR for school newsletter / newspaper) describing the results.

Sample Questions:

Can you recycle a water bottle?

Name a place in the school where there is a recycling bin to put a water bottle.

Can you recycle a pen?

Do you think you are a good recycler? Why?

Are your friends good recyclers? Why?

Do you have a blue bin at home?