

Recycling Paper and Plastics

Overview: A practical and functional way to teach students who access the ASOL aligned curriculum about human impact on the environment is to introduce the skill of recycling to them. This skill not only encompasses the academic investigation and understanding of human use of limited resources and the impact of that use on different ecosystems, but also has the functional components of teaching students how to sort materials by characteristics and properly manage their trash/waste.

Procedure: Begin class with a discussion of how the creation of materials such as plastic milk bottles, paper, and other materials common in elementary classrooms consumes resources that are limited in our environment. The consumption of the resources needed to make these products (plastics - oil; trees - paper) also may affect the habitats of animals and plants that live in those areas. Highlight that in order to conserve these limited resources and lessen our impact on our ecosystem, people can recycle products made of plastic and paper and these materials can be used again.

Have students brainstorm with peers and write/record their ideas of items in the classroom and around the school that could be recycled. Have them share their ideas using their primary communication means (verbal, AAC, ASL, PECS, etc.)

Show students the recycling symbol either on a class recycling bin or a separate image. Discuss how this is the symbol for recycling and that waste that can be recycled can be placed in bins with this logo rather than a trash can. If you have a plastic soda bottle or similar object with a recycling symbol on it as well, show students that the symbol on the bottle matches the recycling symbol on the bin.

Present students with two recycling bins and a set of (clean) plastic and paper items. Talk about how in order to recycle these items, you must sort them by the materials they are made of into paper and plastics. Place a sign that says paper on one bin (with image support if needed) and a sign that says plastic (again with picture support if needed) on the other bin. Demonstrate sorting the paper items into one bin and the plastic items into the other. Take the items out when finished and have students sort the items.

ASOL Covered in this Activity:

3S-LPS7: The student will investigate and understand that ecosystems support a diversity of plants and animals that share limited resources. Key concepts include:

d) the human role in conserving limited resources.

8S-ECO 7 The student will investigate and understand the relationships between ecosystem dynamics and human activity. Key concepts include

e) environmental issues.

Materials Needed:

- Plastic bottles; other plastic recyclables.
- Scrap paper/old newspapers/magazines
- Two recycling bins/containers.
- Recycling symbol.

Instructional Setting: Classroom/School

Community Connections and/or Peer Interaction:

Visit a community recycling center or waste management facility to see how large-scale recycling programs work and where the materials we recycle at school go.

Have students work with peers to recycle waste materials in the classroom into proper containers. Organize a recycling team with other peers and classes to institute a school-wide recycling program.

Functional Activity/Routine:

Learning to identify and sort items by their characteristics and managing trash/waste are inherently functional activity.

Strategies to Collect Evidence:

Tally or count the amount of times a student chooses to discard recyclable waste into the proper recycle bin rather than the trash can.

Evaluate the student's success rate at sorting recyclables into their proper containers.

Specific Options for Differentiating this Activity:

Have students color or draw the recycling symbol.

Have students cut out pictures of recyclable materials from magazines, etc. and paste them into categories.

Use a voice output device programmed with pictures of items to be recycled so students can participate in identifying items and where they would be recycled to.

Program a switch to select appropriate placement of recycled materials.

Extension Ideas:

Expand the materials that your students learn to recycle to include metals, glass, batteries, etc.

Offer to identify, sort, and recycle waste form other classrooms.

Learn to compost food waste.