



Subject: Science/Social Studies **Lesson:** Classroom Waste Audit

Standards Addressed: K.ESS.4, K-2. E.1, 3-5.E.2, K.2.4, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 2.4.1, 3.2.5, 3.3.12, 5.2.10

Objectives: Students will learn how much trash they produce in one day. Students will learn how to reduce the amount of trash they produce.

Materials Needed:

- 1 Tarp for the floor or plastic table cloth to cover tables
- 1 Scale
- 2 Buckets with the tare weight written on their sides
- Paper and sharpies for making 2 charts
- Small signs for “compost”, “recycling”, “reuse”, and “landfill”

Steps:

1. Save 1 days-worth of classroom trash, including food waste
2. Tell your personal story about why you’ve discovered how important it is to reduce waste. You can do a slideshow, showing the students pictures of their landfill, how a landfill (or incinerator) works, how far away it is, and how trash is transported there. We have a movie about how our children discovered plastics washing up on their beaches that you can download or play off the web as a teaching tool, showing how kids can take action, learn where the ocean plastics are coming from, and what they can do about it.
3. Weigh your recyclables and trash separately.
4. Spread it all out on a tarp.
5. Have the students separate all items into discreet piles next to their appropriate signs: “Compost,” “recycling,” “reuse,” and “landfill.”
6. Teach recycling: Discuss what goes into your local recycling and help the students identify those items.
7. Start a composter, vermicomposter, or chicken bucket. Some classrooms or schools have composters or vermicomposters outside. If not, find a volunteer family that will take the organics home to their chickens or compost bin.
8. Teach reuse: Save items like Ziploc bags, rubber bands or paper clips that were in the trash but can be reused.
9. Weigh your newly separated piles of trash, compost, reuse and recycling.
10. Celebrate your results by making a graph so the students can see the change in landfill trash versus recycling and compost. The decrease in landfill trash will be surprising.

Follow Up Activity:

Have the classroom write a manifesto for changes in behavior to create less waste. Suggestions might include some of the following:

1. Place pictures of recyclables on the recycling bins as a reminder to students.
2. Move a recycling bin near the paper towel dispenser (wet, clean paper towels can be recycled).
3. Start a compost bin, worm bin or a chicken bucket.
4. Start a reuse box as a place to put items that can be reused.
5. Start other recycling streams that don't go in the recycling bin but can be taken to other recycling facilities, like plastic bags (local supermarket) and juice boxes (a local Terracycle brigade).

Notes: