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"one man's trash..."

Solid Waste District of La Porte County

Your guide to reducing, reusing, and recycling



Classroom Guide provided by the

Solid Waste District of La Porte County

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Our spring newsletter focuses on ways that we can improve our world by reducing, reusing, recycling, and using our resources wisely.

In this Classroom Guide, we give you ideas so that you can incorporate the newsletter into your classroom instruction, helping meet your educational goals and teach your standards and helping us share this important information about our community.

If you have suggestions or comments about the newsletter or this guide, please call or write to us. We would love to hear how you are using our ideas and what we can do to make this resource even better.

A Clear Vision for 2020

The first Earth Day, in 1970, mobilized 20 million Americans to organize their efforts concerning environmental issues. By 1990, Earth Day had gone global, as 200 million people in 141 countries joined the event's 20th anniversary activities. Today, more than 1 billion people in 192 countries participate in Earth Day, making it the largest civic observance in the world.

This year, the Earth Day Network has set a clear vision for its members: 7.8 billion trees planted by 2020, or a tree for every human on Earth. "Trees for the Earth" is the first of five major goals the network is undertaking in its countdown to Earth Day's 50th anniversary celebration. (Learn more at www.earthday.org.)

Why trees? Because they are vital to clean air, stable soil, the mitigation of CO2 emissions, and the health of our communities. Worldwide, over 15 billion trees are felled each year for numerous reasons—more than 50 football fields of trees every minute! The Earth Day Network wants to offset these numbers through awareness and old-fashioned hard work.

You can help your students plant a tree a piece. Have them contact the local Arbor Day committee or university extension agency to learn about our community's needs. Through a leadership campaign, students can raise awareness and enlist the help of families, friends, and community members to implement their ideas. Be sure to have your students report their results to the Earth Day Network so that any trees they plant are counted toward the 7.8 billion goal.



Kids Teaching Kids

For Screen-Free Week, which is May 2-8, 2016, encourage your students to get away from the computer, smartphone, or tablet, and have some fun by putting together an activity book about the environment. Ask your students to design mazes, puzzles, word finds, coloring pages, quiz pages, and other activities about what they learned during Earth Month. Create a cover and make copies for them to give to younger siblings, cousins, and friends. Learn more about Screen-Free Week at www.screenfree.org.

To Green or Not to Green, Is That a Question?

Every issue has supporters, detractors, and many angles to consider. Environmentalism is no exception, and it presents a rich opportunity for students to learn how to educate themselves about an issue and decide if and how to respond.

Ask students to select an environmental topic and investigate it. How and why do stances vary? Is the information provided by different sides consistent? Why or why not? Which sources of information are dependable and what makes them so? What conclusions do your students draw and what actions, if any, would they consider taking?

Have your **English** students conduct a series of debates on their topics. Ask **social studies** students to report on actions being taken by various groups, including effects, benefits, and harms. Have **science** students present research that supports and/or discounts various hypotheses, the methods by which the research has been conducted, and information on the conducting bodies.

You and your students can look for ideas at the National Institute of Health Sciences' Kids Environment Kids Health site at <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov>.



Reader Redux

1 We learn a great deal about ancient civilizations from their waste, or what archaeologists call midden piles (buried trash heaps). We can see what people ate, what they made, who they traded with, and what they did for fun. Have your students read “From the Wash to the Ocean” or another piece about the collection of plastic waste in our oceans. If a future civilization were to find and examine our own oceanic midden pile, what might they learn about us? Read “From the Wash to the Ocean” at <http://news.discovery.com/earth/global-warming/washing-machine-pollutes-111024.htm>.

2 Got trash? Make art! As a class, take time to look at the work of Chris Jordan, Alejandro Durán, Fabrice Monteiro, and Vik Muniz at their websites. Use found objects brought in by your students to create a photo collage, a mosaic, a sculpture, or a cast of characters for a puppet show.

- ◆ Chris Jordan: www.ChrisJordan.com
- ◆ Alejandro Durán: www.AlejandroDuran.com
- ◆ Fabrice Monteiro: <http://FabriceMonteiro.viewbook.com>
- ◆ Vik Muniz: <http://VikMuniz.net>

Bottles and Bags

All living things consume and produce. Even the most basic life forms take in what they must to live and expel waste as a result. Humans have developed the means to turn raw materials into the many things we need—and want. We also create complex systems of disposal, reuse, and recycling for discards and by-products. Here are some ideas to get students thinking about the impact of their consumption and making informed consumer choices.

Survey your students to find out who drinks tap water and who drinks bottled water. How many bottled water drinkers also recycle? Chart the results and calculate your class percentages. By some estimates, about 80% of water bottles are thrown away instead of recycled. Is your class percentage lower or higher? Why?

Ask your students if they personally prefer tap or bottled water and chart the results. Have them research and discuss differences between the two. Compare costs, safety, processing, sources, transport, taste, convenience, and disposal. Ask your students their preferences again. Have your results changed? If so, discuss why.

The average American family uses 1,500 plastic “T-shirt” bags per year. Some consumers oppose the use of these bags; others do not. Have students visit www.bagtheban.com and <http://plasticbaglaws.org>. Ask them to summarize the main arguments of banning—or not—the plastic bag. What do they think?

