The Three 'R's

Grade 1-5 Lesson Plan

Focus Question

What is each person's responsibility for environmental stewardship?

Purpose

In this lesson, students learn how reusing, reducing, and recycling can save resources and reduce pollution. They take personal responsibility for environmental stewardship and strategize what they can do in their school, homes, and community to reduce pollution.

Duration

One 45-minute class period

Student Objectives

- Discuss the meaning and applications of the three Rs - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
- Observe effects on the environment of improper plastic bag disposal.
- Investigate how they can affect the environment in a positive way.
- Give examples and benefits of reusing, reducing, and recycling.

Materials

- Student copies of the text on the Earth Day Network site: http://ww2.earthday.net/plasticbags
- Internet access to view a two-minute film about plastic bags at: http://ww2.earthday.net/plasticbags
- Copy of the book Dinosaurs to the Rescue! A Guide to Protecting Our Planet (see Bibliographical References)
- Chart paper with two columns labeled Paper and Plastic (or a plastic bag and a paper bag to tape over the column headings).
- Students should create a three-fold with these titles: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

Instructional Procedures

Create a two-column graph with a plastic bag at the top of one column and a paper bag taped to the top of the other column. Ask the learners: "After you purchase groceries at a store which is better for the environment – paper or plastic?"

Give each learner a self-sticking note and ask them to write their name on it. Have them place their sticky notes on the plastic or paper columns on the display board. You may have students who know that using a reusable bag is the best option. If someone mentions it, add it as a third choice. Look at the data collected and have the students describe the results. Then state, "To save the planet, we must use the three Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." Check for understanding of these terms:

- Recycle: to make something over into a new product
- Reuse: to use something again
- Reduce: – to use less of something

State, "Now that we have reviewed the three Rs would anyone like to change their vote?" Allow students to make changes by moving their names from one column to another. Have a couple students describe the new data.

Give each student a printout of the facts about paper and plastic bags on the following Earth Day Network site: http://ww2.earthday.net/plasticbags.Have the students read the article and highlight facts they think are important. Then show the video clip at the bottom of the website.

Write the words Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle on the display board. Have the students name ideas for applying the three Rs to plastic bags. Write their ideas under each word. (They may include ideas about paper bags and cloth bags.)

Read aloud the book Dinosaurs to the Rescue. Stop often to discuss the difference in behavior between Slobosaurus and the other characters in the community.

Ask the students to explain in what way reusing, reducing, and recycling are philanthropic acts. Review the meaning of the team philanthropy as "giving time, talent, or treasure or taking action for the common good."

Discuss why it is important for the community to work together to address the problems of pollution. Ask the students to reflect on their own personal responsibility to the environment and what they can do to make a difference.

Students will now use their three-folds Divide the students into groups to brainstorm more ideas for ways to put the three Rs to use at home, school, and community. Ideas may come from the book and the plastic bag discussions. Have each student write ideas on the handout.

Come to a consensus on what the class will do related to the three Rs during this Earth Day Event to be good stewards of the Earth and work for the good of the community.

Assessment

Have students demonstrate their knowledge of natural resources by writing a paragraph on why they feel plastic or paper bags are better for the environment. Allow for students to come up with alternative solutions.

OR

Have students demonstrate their knowledge of conservation by writing a pledge to change one thing in their lives in order to make a difference. (Bringing a reusable water bottle to school, not using Styrofoam containers, reusing containers for other purposes before discarding them, etc.)

School/Home Connection

Ask students to bring a variety of items from home that were destined for the trash but could be reused, recycled, or reduced. Studwents should be prepared to explain how each item could have been reduced, reused, or recycled as they attach it to the Slobosaurus outline (see Extension). The final product will be a large, class collage. Be sure students ask an adult's permission to bring the items to school.

Teacher Note: Have a selection of reusable or recyclable items for students who are unable to bring something from home.

Extension

Display a very large outline of a dinosaur (Slobosaurus) on a bulletin board. Encourage students to bring items from home over the next few days that could be reused, reduced, or recycled to make a collage on the Slobosaurus. (See School/Home Connection.) Have students calculate their impact on the environment and learn about ways to reduce it by using the Carbon footprint calculator: http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency site contains general information about composting and recycling. Get information on waste reduction and starting a recycling program in your school.

If you have a local place that recycles plastic bags, have the students bring in the plastic bags they have accumulated in their homes. When you have a large collection, calculate how many plastic bags you have and divide by the number of people who brought them in. Then multiply by the number of people in the classroom to get an idea of how many plastic bags are used by the families represented in the class. Then discuss how many that would be for the community or state. Bring the bags to the recycling site.

Research the chemical makeup of plastic bags and the amount of oil used in plastic bag production. Find the current research about the potentially toxic chemical Bisphenol A used in plastic bags.

Resources

- Brown, Laurie and Brown, M. Dinosaurs to the Rescue!: A Guide to Protecting Our Planet. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994. ISBN: 0316113972
- Adapted from Learning to Give lesson: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- http://www.learningtogive.org/lessons/unit145/lesson4.html
- Earth Day Network. "Get Rid of Plastic Bags ...and Plastic." http://ww2.earthday.net/plasticbags
- Carbon Footprint Calculator: http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Wastes site. http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/index.htm

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Common Core Standard Suggestions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

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