

CSWD Recycling Relay

Objective:

Students become experts in what can be recycled and composted

Grade Level:

K-12

Background:

Familiarize yourself with the CSWD list of what can be recycled and what can be composted through the *drop-off* compost program

Activity:

Introduce the topic as a class then split into groups for the relay

Materials:

Where your 'Garbage' Goes flow chart (see visuals)

2 trash bags full of clean examples of trash, recyclable and compostable items from the cafeteria and from home (ask students to bring in their own examples as a homework assignment)

2 trash containers, 2 blue bins, and 2 compost buckets

2 sets of waste station posters (see visuals)

Rotten carrot photo (see visuals)

Jack Johnson's 3Rs song (music takes pressure off of timid students involved in a group activity) See the film and music section of CSWD school programs website for a link or purchase off the *Curious George* movie soundtrack

Time Allotment:

45 minutes

I. Introduction

Why are you here?

Focus the audience on the reason for your presentation: to help everyone understand how to take care of their unwanted things like trash, recycling, and compost in the classroom and cafeteria

II. Body

Who knows what the three R's are? For a visual, draw an inverted pyramid, with Reduce as the top and most important step, and Recycling/Rot as the last. As you move down the pyramid, energy use goes up.

Preventing waste from entering into your life uses no energy or fossil fuels, it just requires a good decision and perhaps a little planning. Reuse requires creativity, or coordination between the first and second user. Recycling and composting/ rot require energy and fuel to move the used items, process them into new things, and to distribute them to stores where people can buy them.

Reduce- to make less of something. Examples: Buying things with less packaging *or* reducing the amount of bags you use when you shop by taking along your own cloth bag. Or eating everything on your plate, so you don't have to compost it.

ReUse- to use things over and over. Examples: Using both sides of a sheet of paper before recycling it *or* sharing used clothing with siblings or friends

Recycle and Rot- to convert materials that would have been garbage into new products; giving a new life to what once was trash

Where does your garbage go when you throw it away?

Trash can → curb → trash truck → transfer station → landfill

Fact: The average Vermonter generates between 4 and 5 lbs of trash per day!!

Landfill- is different from a dump; it's a big hole in the ground that's lined with thick plastic to prevent toxic water from entering streams, and rivers. Things do NOT rot in a landfill because the decomposers (like worms) chose not to live there (they have no air to breathe because we compact all the garbage).

Show visual: 10 year-old carrots

Ask for quiet hands: What are a few adjectives that describe a landfill? No one wants a landfill in their backyard, so we use the 3 R's to save space in landfills and to conserve natural resources (aluminum, oil, trees, etc.). Things get wasted when they end up in a landfill.

Show visual: *Where your 'Garbage Goes'* to illustrate the trail of your things in Vermont

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Draw out a waste station with three bins and explain using waste station posters

True Trash includes things like juice boxes, wrappers, and plastic bags
It ends up in a VT landfill

Recycle things like plastic, metal and glass
These things get chance to become a new product. For example, we recycle empty plastic milk containers into new milk jugs

Compost things like food scraps, leftover milk and napkins
Natural cycles help take things that were once alive or living (like food scraps and napkins) into healthy soil to put back on farms and gardens. *Ask* older students or *tell* younger students why a paper napkin is compostable (it was once part of a living tree at one point)

We do a good job with recycling, but we still put a lot of stuff in the landfill.

What sorts of things can you put in your blue bin?

Let the kids list the materials (*clean and dry* paper, *empty* plastic milk containers, metal cans, cardboard, and glass) that go in the blue bin. Cover a few of the common mistakes like no plastic bags or caps for younger students.

What goes in the Compost?

Pick quiet hands to explain what is included in the compost, hold up examples, and ask a student what his/her favorite thing to compost is. Ask about a plastic utensil- where would that go?

III. Activity and Conclusion- Students in Circle

Dump out clean samples of waste (the more examples the better) and set up Trash, Recycling, and Compost containers- put 3Rs song on pause

Split students into two groups and charge them with sorting through the pile to reduce what ends up in the garbage. Everyone takes one piece from the pile and makes a choice... lead by example before starting (pick up a paper towel and put it in the compost). Have students line up, single file, in two lines and compete to finish sorting their pile in relay style.

Play song/ sort until everything is in its place

ReUnite- review mistakes and good choices.

Have everyone repeat after you the FOUR Rs: Reduce, ReUse, Recycle and Rot!