

## What's this mess?

Creating recycling areas in the classroom

**Years** Early Years – R - 2

**Time** 40 minutes

**Overview** Students engage in activities to help them understand the idea of recycling and what types of items are recyclable. They then use this knowledge to set up a recycling area in the classroom.

**Materials** Clean recyclable items which typically may be found in school such as:  
Plastic bottles  
Metal cans (tape sharp edges)  
Aluminum foil  
Newspapers  
Magazines  
Junk mail  
Recycling bins or boxes  
Markers, and/or crayons  
**Teachers Note:** Spread the clean recyclable items around the classroom. Have the *poster* handy. You can also refer to the poster for additional recyclable items.

**Procedure** Warm-up: As the students enter, make no reference to the items. After all of them have been seated; begin conducting the class as you normally would, appear in not to notice that anything's different in the classroom.

After 5-10 minutes, if no students notice or begin to clean up the items, pretend to suddenly notice the mess, and ask the class to help clean up the room. Place the items in a pile at the front of the room.

After the materials have been put into one pile ask the class, "What do you think we should do with all of this stuff"

Ask for suggestions from the class. After you get their ideas, introduce the way you can recycle in your school, explaining that recyclable items are sorted into two basic categories. Display the *poster* and review which items go in the bins.

Separate the students into groups to help sort out the items. Ask them, "What do all of the items that go into the green bin have in common?" If they do not respond "paper products," guide them to that answer. Then ask, "What do all of the items that go into the other bin have in

common?" If they do not respond "other recyclable items" Or "metal, glass, and plastic," guide them to those answers. Have the students sort the material into the bins they think are the right ones. As they put each one in a bin, discuss why it belongs there.

Refer to the *poster* to have the students check whether the items are in the appropriate bins or boxes.

When they are finished sorting, ask the class for ideas on how to share what they have learned with the rest of the school. Suggest that they create posters or pictures of which items go in the which bins / boxes.

Distribute art materials and have students create their own posters.

Wrap-up: If possible. Have students distribute their posters around the school or in a designated place in the hallway.

Teacher's Note: An alternate way to conduct this activity is to have the students create life-size drawings of blue and green bins and hang them in the school. Ask the students to draw pictures of recyclable items and attach them to the appropriate bin drawings.

ENDNOTES:

Activity adapted from

What does it do . . . that recycling blue What a Mess activity, First Brands Corporation, Danbury, CT, 1992.

The Next Step: 50 More Things You Can Do to Save the Earth, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City. MO. 1991, p. 18.

