



Recycling Lesson Plan- Don't Waste the Moment

Driving question- How much of the waste which is thrown away in the school cafeteria may be composted or recycled?



Lesson - Divide students into groups so that each group may be given a different assignment for collecting data about the waste generated in the school cafeteria; some students may collect data in different locations, during different breakfast and lunch periods, or on different days during the week. Students will survey and record items placed in the trash and record the number of students eating during that time. Their data collecting may include categories such as Styrofoam plates, plastic forks, food scraps, paper products, and packaging materials. After collecting data, information must be categorized as compostable, recyclable, or trash.

Information from each group may be compiled on charts. If students have experience working with spreadsheets, they may consider using Microsoft Office Excel or Google forms; tutorials are available online. TechSteps also provide instruction for Excel. Graphs may be created to illustrate data from the cafeteria waste research.

After analyzing their data, students will be asked to identify how much waste was generated; they may express it as the mass or the volume of the waste. They should provide details about what was thrown away and state what could be have been recycled or composted. Students should be able to answer questions about how they determined what could be composted and what the triangles on plastic materials represent.

Following their research, student teams should propose a solution to reduce the amount of solid waste in the garbage and present it to the class. They should consider the best way to manage the sorting of the waste materials from the school cafeteria. How might students be involved in the process? Students should cite resources used in their research.

Informational Text - As part of their presentations, students should be prepared with an, "If you want to learn more..." recommended reading for their peers, which includes the book or article and the name of the newspaper or magazine, author, a quick summary, and the ISBN.