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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FORUM

WASTE FREE CLASSROOM

Waste Free Classroom

Every year in Northern Ireland we throw away enough waste to cover the whole country! Most of this ends up in landfills, which are costly, unsightly and could have major impacts on the environment and our health.

It's time to Wake up to Waste!

EHS is currently developing an education programme for waste management linking with the Department of Education, CCEA, Education Authorities, Local Councils, Community Groups and the NGO education sector.

This programme promotes the objectives of the Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland to young people and is integrated into the EHS Environmental Education Strategy. The programme is innovative and cross-curricular, incorporating the themes and requirements of the new Northern Ireland curriculum for foundation years, all 4 Key Stages, after schools and tertiary education.

A range of activities and downloadable resources has been designed for use to assist in the integration of waste management into teaching schedules and after school clubs which can be adapted to suit the needs of various groups.

Ten fact sheets have been produced which focus on the following issues:

Fact sheet 1 - Northern Ireland Waste

In Northern Ireland household waste levels have amounted to over 929,111 tonnes in 2002 alone, with each household contributing approximately one tonne - a figure which is said to be rising. European legislation is now obliging us to find more suitable ways to deal with our waste. As a result, the Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland has been revised.

Fact sheet 2 - Waste Reduction

Waste reduction refers to the reduction or elimination of the amount of waste produced initially and involves being economical with materials, energy and money, and developing products or techniques to minimise waste generation. Depositing waste at landfill sites is wasteful of resources, is damaging to the environment and, most worrying, is increasing on an annual basis. There are many ways to minimise such waste whether at home, work or school.

Fact sheet 3 - Reduce, Reuse & Recycle

The amount of waste produced is strongly influenced by the consumer-driven lifestyle in which we live. However, the simplest measures taken by each of us can help to Reduce, Reuse or Recycle such waste which in the long-term will minimise the extent of environmental impact and save money!

Fact sheet 4 - Plastics

This fact sheet identifies the main types of plastics used, why it is important that they be recycled and the various methods of recycling available.

Fact sheet 5 - Composting Waste

This encourages learning about the benefits of composting and details the procedure to follow when commencing composting as well as information on how the process works.

Fact sheets 6, 7 & 8 - Paper, Cans and Glass

These fact sheets illustrate the importance of recycling such materials and suggest tips for recycling and what you and I can do to reduce levels of waste.

Fact sheets 9 & 10 - What Happens to our Waste & Energy from Waste

These fact sheets identify what happens to our waste after it leaves our homes, schools and workplaces as well as the benefits in terms of energy production which can be generated from such waste.

Further Information.....

The DoE website for the Wake Up To Waste Campaign is www.wakeuptowaste.org where further information can be obtained. The EHS website is ehsni.gov.uk and contains further information on the NI Waste Strategy and legislation. Other resource packs and information for both teachers and students on how to create a *Waste Free Classroom* and a *Waste Free Lunch* are also available from the website above. Visit kidsagainstwaste.org for an interactive and informative waste website for children.

THE WASTE FREE CLASSROOM - Reproduced from Environment & Heritage Service Information for Teachers

A Waste Free Lunch

Plan your own packed lunch so that there is nothing to throw in the rubbish bin when you have finished. Think about how you are going to keep the food fresh and what sort of wrapping or containers you are going to use.

Explain what you propose to do. You may wish to:

- Use refillable bottles or flasks rather than cans or cartons,
- Put sandwiches in a reusable container rather than a bag, cling film or foil,
- Avoid food that has lots of packaging – bring fruit or vegetables instead and compost the left-over cores and skins.
- You could also investigate the possibility of having a school dinner.

Mathematical Waste

- Predict the total weight of rubbish thrown away by your class in a day.
- Predict how much waste the whole school would produce in a week by dividing the total produced by the number of pupils in the class, and then multiplying that amount by the number of pupils in the school.
- Analyse how much waste the staff room produces
- Examine your class waste and separate into three categories to be weighed and represented graphically:
 - ◆ Reusable material
 - ◆ Recyclable material
 - ◆ Non recyclable material

Packaging Audit

In this activity you can find out how much packaging is used by your class each week, looking at all the things that may be packaged from your lunches to the paper, pencils and pens that you use. You will be counting the number of layers of packaging around each product and analysing the material from which the packaging is made.

- Design a standard sheet for the class to record the items used each week. It should show how many loose items were used, how many packaged items, how many layers of packaging each had, what these layers were made from (e.g. card, paper, plastic, aluminium, foil, glass) and whether the packaging could be recycled or reused or not.
- After a week collect all the record sheets and as a class find out:
 - ◆ The ratio of loose to packaged items
 - ◆ The average amount of packaging
 - ◆ Which packaging material is used most often
 - ◆ How much of the packaging can be recycled
 - ◆ How much of the packaging can be reused

Display the results as graphs.

- If you like you could extend this by getting the pupils to analyse what is brought into their homes in an average week. They will need to tell their parents that they will be looking at all items brought into the house for a week.

Organise a trip to a local shop. Look at the various types of packaging. Choose one example of a product you feel is over packaged. Get them to write about why they think it is over packaged. Why do manufacturers use so much packaging? A good example might be "Dairylea Lunchables" or a box of fruit. How did people package things 50 years ago or 100 years ago?

Extension activities:

- What does over-packaging mean?
- How many examples of over-packaging did your class find?
- What percentage of your weekly household waste is packaging?
- Why is packaging important?
- Can you think of items where increasing the packaging decreases the amount of overall waste?
- Find out what (if anything) industry is doing to reduce the amount of packaging waste.
- What happens to the waste that cannot be recycled or reused?
- List ways in which you could reduce the amount of packaging waste thrown away each week by your class.

Individual Pledges

Encourage the class to sign up to some individual pledges about how they are going to work towards their **Waste Free Classroom** by filling in a pledge sheet. The children should work out exactly what pledges they are going to make individually and as a class. This can be displayed in the classroom. An example is shown below.

NAME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Waste Free Lunch	School Lunch	Switch off lights	Use less paper	Recycle ink cartridges	Compost bio-degradable waste	???

When the children have all signed up to a pledge, they can each receive a certificate available to download from: www.wakeuptowaste.org/education/resources

CLASS PLEDGE

WE THE UNDERSIGNED WILL:

1. **Turn off the computer and printer when not in use.**
When on standby, they still use as much as 85% of what they use when they are fully on!
2. **Turn off taps in the toilets when we wash our hands.**
If you leave the tap running, you waste up to 3 litres of water each time you wash your hands.
3. **Ask our parents if we can walk to school or take the bus.**
Cars cause a lot of pollution – the less we use them, the better for our environment.
4. **Keep windows and doors closed when the heating is on.**
If it is too hot, we will turn the thermostats down.
5. **Make sure that lights are not left on in an empty classroom and we will ask the caretaker to replace the light bulbs with energy efficient ones.**
6. **Ask the Principal if we can get Green Electricity from Northern Ireland Electricity.**
Alternative energies are much better for the environment and more sustainable than coal and gas fired power stations.
7. **Ensure that we minimise the amount of waste we produce by REDUCING, REUSING and RECYCLING as much as possible.**

Websites and further reading.

Web address	Content
www.nrwf.org.uk	A website dedicated to bringing representatives together from the statutory and NGO sectors working to deliver sustainable waste management.
www.crn.org.uk	The Community Recycling Network UK is a membership organisation promoting community based sustainable waste management as a practical and effective way of tackling the UK's growing waste problem.
www.envirowise.gov.uk	Envirowise offers UK businesses free, independent, confidential advice and support on practical ways to minimise waste and reduce their environmental impact.
www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org/ulster_wildlife_trust/youth_and_education/?id=4	Wild about Waste project is an education package which links the issues of resource use and waste management with the threat to wildlife.
www.brysonhouse.co.uk/recycling	Part of Bryson House's activities aims to provide sustainable solutions to waste management problems by developing community-focused, accessible services delivered in partnership with local authorities.
www.eco-schools.org.uk	The Eco-Schools programme enables schools to become more sustainable and students more environmentally aware, through a supported and recognised award scheme.
www.kidsagainstwaste.org	Linked to the EHS 'Wake up to Waste' campaign, this site aims to inform children about Waste and Recycling issues, using interactive fun games and activities.
www.wastewatch.org.uk	Waste Watch is an organisation promoting and encouraging action on waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

Grants and Awards for environmental projects

Greenfingers Challenge. The Greenfingers challenge is one of the UK's biggest horticultural competitions aimed at young people up to the age of 18. Prize money up to the value of £1500 is offered for gardening projects which can demonstrate a range of horticultural and organic practices, sustainable development and environmental awareness. For further details (01942) 612639. **NB: Follows school year therefore starts each September until June.**

Natural Heritage Grants Application Pack. The Natural Heritage Grant Programme is not accepting grant applications at the present time. A call for applications is expected early in 2006. Contact the Environment & Heritage Service for further information on Tel (028) 9054 6442

NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) has produced Grant-Tracker which is an interactive software package containing up-to-date information on all funders with an interest and responsibility towards the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. For further information contact (028) 9087 7777.

Big Lottery Fund. Available in Northern Ireland through the Young People's Fund and Change UR Future Programme. Closing date for applications is 27th March 2006. Further details are available from www.biglotteryfund.org.uk.

Prince's Trust Children in Need Project. Contact Voluntary Service Belfast, 028 9020 0850.

BBC Children in Need. Contact BBC (028) 9022 82121.



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