

Trash Journal

Overview:

Students will keep track of everything they throw away over the course of a week.

Objectives:

1. Students will be more attentive to their trash production.
2. Students will think about what can be re-used and recycled.
3. Students will brainstorm and implement ways to reduce their trash production.

Time:

About 10-20 minutes a day for one week

Materials:

Pen or Pencil

A Journal

(Optional: Make your own journal by reusing paper and cereal boxes – see Cereal Box Journal under Art and Craft Projects)

Procedure:

1. Start by asking students what they have thrown away so far today. List their answers on the board.
2. Brainstorm about how much trash you throw away each week. A whole trash bag's worth? More?
3. Optional: If your class is age appropriate, discuss the effects of trash on our environment. (Most of this trash ends up in landfills; trash on the streets can end up in rivers and the ocean. All our trash in Humboldt is shipped to Oregon!)
4. Introduce the trash journal and what it is for. Every day for a week we will write down everything we throw away. Pass out journals (or make them). Write down everything you threw away and recycled today. Continue throughout the week.
5. Throughout the week analyze your results. Did you throw away anything that could have been re-used? Anything that could have been recycled?
6. At the end of the week analyze your results. Did your trash production decrease throughout the week? If your class has the appropriate skills, make a graph of how many items of trash were thrown each day, vs. items that were recycled or composted. Or make a bar graph of the types of trash. What was the most common thing thrown out?
7. Brainstorm ways to reduce your trash production. For example, bring re-usable bags to the grocery store, buy things with less packaging, re-use jars and other containers, use a lunch box instead of paper bags and Tupperware instead of sandwich bags, make a Snack-to-go container (see Art and Craft Projects), etc.