



# The Goodness Of Your Heart vs. The Bottom Line\*

## Activity E.m

GRADE LEVELS: 4 - 6

### OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Understand that financial reward -- the profit motive -- plays an indispensable role in making recycling happen.
- Understand that in order for recycling to occur, markets for recyclable materials must be available.

### RATIONALE:

Education and a sense of responsibility for the health of the environment will increase recycling but immediate financial reward is also a powerful catalyst to action. Sorting and saving recyclables is futile if no place nearby actually recycles the material. For recycling centers to exist, there needs to be: (1) a demand for the recycled materials the center collects, and (2) a chance to make a profit in running the recycling center.

### TEACHER BACKGROUND:

In some areas, recycling is mandatory. For example, Voorhees Township in Camden County, New Jersey, has a 100 percent recycling rate. To have their trash picked up, residents must put out a recycling pail along with the garbage pail. If the recycling pail is not out, the garbage is not collected. In Oregon, all communities with a population of 4,000 people or more, by law, must have some form of curbside recycling.

### PRE- & POST-TEST QUESTIONS:

1. Can you list five recyclable items?
2. What is the best way to motivate people to recycle and to operate recycling centers?
3. What is a mandatory recycling program?

### PROCEDURE:

1. Make a chart on the blackboard or overhead like the one shown below.
2. Recording column A responses first, then column B responses, ask such questions as:
  - a. Would you wear white gloves to school if I asked you?
  - b. Would you wear white gloves to school if I paid you?
  - a. Would you eat a raw egg if I asked you?
  - b. Would you eat a raw egg if I paid you?
  - a. Would you stop drinking pop if I asked you?

- b. Would you stop drinking pop if I paid you?
- a. Would you help someone who was hurt if I asked you?
- b. Would you help someone who was hurt if I paid you?
- a. Would you pick up litter if I asked you?
- b. Would you pick up litter if I paid you?
- a. Would you recycle if I asked you?
- b. Would you recycle if I paid you?

3. Make up your own sets of questions. Consider actually asking students to do some of the above (have a raw egg on hand).

4. Ask: "What differences do we see between columns A and B?" "Why these differences?"  
 If something is pleasant or good, are people more likely to do it when asked? Even more likely if paid?

If something is stupid, unreasonable, or unpleasant, are people less likely to do it if asked? More likely if paid?

So if we wanted people to recycle, how could we best get them to do it? Educate people about the importance of recycling? Pay people for recycling?

What about people who run recycling center: Why do they do it? What do these people need in order to keep running their business? What would happen if they had no one to sell recyclables to? What has to exist in order for a recycler to sell recyclables?

If sufficient markets for recyclables do not now exist but the public demands that more waste be recycled rather than dumped in landfills or burned, should government help create markets for recyclables? For example, plastics recycling programs now exist. Nationally PETE plastic soft drink bottles have a 20 percent recycling rate. In Washington State, PETE plastic beverage bottles are now recycled at 8 center a pound. How could a market for other plastics be developed? What are some things government can do to stimulate recycling? Are there problems if government subsidizes recycling? What should government do?

**EXTENDED LEARNING:**

1. Make a list of five recyclable materials found in your home.
2. Call a recycler and find out the market price for each recyclable item.
3. Determine which recyclable items can turn a profit.
4. Report your findings to the class.

	A Asked	B Paid	C (Optional) Increased Pay
1. White gloves			
2. Raw egg			
3. No pop			
4. Injured person			
5. Pick up litter			
6. Recycle			

\*Source: Washington State Dept. of Ecology A-Way With Waste