



What Happens To Your Solid Waste?*

Activity P.b

GRADE LEVELS: K – 3

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Explain what happens to solid waste.
- Define incineration, recycling, composting, landfills, and litter.

MATERIALS:

- Transparency: “Terms to Know”
- Student Worksheet
- Materials for Student Picture or Mural
- Teacher needs research material to find out what happens to the trash in the local area. Contact your Solid Waste Authority.

VOCABULARY: Solid waste is made up of:

- Durable goods (e.g., furniture, tires, large appliances)
- Nondurable goods (e.g., paper products, clothing, shoes, small plastic products)
- Containers and packaging (e.g., cans, bottles, boxes of wrapping material) and other materials (food and yard waste) which we throw away

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask the students what happens to the solid waste from their home garbage cans. “Where does your garbage collector take it?” Most of our nation’s trash (about 73%) is disposed of in landfills. A landfill is a dump site where trash is buried under layers of soil. When it is full it is covered with soil and planted with grass. (Use the transparency. Uncover the definition of landfill.)

Discuss: “What do you think happens to garbage that has been deposited in a landfill? Do you think it stays the same? Items that stay the same are called nondegradable. Do you think it changes? Items that rot or decompose are called degradable.

2. “In the last few years people have been encouraged to do something called recycling. What does recycling mean?” (Uncover recycling on the transparency.) “What kinds of things can be recycled? What are two of the reasons people are encouraged to recycle?” (First, we are running out of raw materials to make new products, and second, we are running out of places to put our trash!)

3. “Another thing people have been encouraged to do is composting. What does composting mean? (Uncover composting on the transparency.) “What would be the advantage of composting?”

4. “Besides landfills, recycling and composting, another way to get rid of solid waste is incineration. Do you know what incineration is?” (Uncover incineration on the transparency.) “What happens to something when you burn it? Can you think of a way to use the heat energy that is produced?” (Use it to heat water to change it to steam that turns a turbine to generate electricity.)

5. “Another thing that happens to unwanted items is that they get thrown away in public places. What do we call this action?” (Littering – uncover littering on the transparency.) “Is it a good idea to litter? Why not?”

6. Personalize the situation by discussing the way waste is handled in your locale. You and your students can research to find out this information. The yellow pages of your phone book would provide a good resource.

7. Use the student worksheet, matching terms with definitions and pictures.

RELATED ACTIVITY:

Make individual pictures or a classroom mural showing what happens to the solid waste in your area.

*Source: Du Pont Solid Waste Management Curriculum K - 6