

Go Green!

This lesson reminds students of their responsibility to the environment. Students will evaluate how environmentally responsible they are at school through completing an environmental inventory. They will examine how materials are used, how electricity is conserved, and determine what could be done better to reduce environmental impact.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Self-discipline

Lesson Timeframe

35-40 minutes

Required Materials

Environmental Inventory worksheet

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**

See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Evaluate how to be environmentally responsible at home and at school.
- Identify how well school spaces are using and conserving materials and resources.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Every person on earth has a personal carbon footprint that they leave as they experience the world. You are responsible for your effect on the environment. The best way to truly accept this is to evaluate this effect. How much water do you use each day? Are you conscious about the electricity usage in your home? Are you part of a recycling or composting program? Most of us are aware of these simple ways to lighten our impact. However, this week's challenge is to identify unique ways to decrease your carbon footprint at school. Are there ways to reduce your waste? How does your school handle recycling? Your kind actions set a terrific example for the students in your class!

Tips for Diverse Learners

- The worksheet requires a lot of observation, critical thinking, and writing. Consider pairing students ahead of time so that pairs are evenly matched and each group has an opportunity to be successful and to teach each other.
- If you do not feel your students can manage the freedom of observing other school spaces or even speaking with staff managing those spaces, then keep the project confined to your classroom spaces.
- If you feel your students need a greater degree of autonomy and challenge, the inventory can include formal interviews and investigation of the companies the school contracts with for things like water, heating and cooling, and other operational systems. Students can investigate if the school is partnering with “green” companies and what the school could be doing more efficiently. Students can also investigate the larger school garbage and recycling system; how much compostable waste is generated and what is being done with it?



Share

5-7 minutes

So far in this unit we have talked about what it means to be responsible for something, what our responsibilities are, and what happens when we fail to complete our responsibilities. Hopefully you are seeing just how important you are, and how we all work together to make things run smoothly!

There is something else that everyone in the world is responsible for together. Can anyone think of what that might be? What is the one thing that everyone has a responsibility to take care of?

Invite student answers. Answer: The Earth!

Quickly, let's do a round of "popcorn" about why it is important to take care of the Earth. I will start and then, like popcorn, you can just "pop" with your ideas. Keep them short so we can all get a chance to "pop!" Okay, let's begin.

Teacher starts with his/her answer, such as, "So we have clean water to drink," and students pop from there.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

The following can be done either as a large group discussion, in small groups, or as a written activity.

What are some ways that we show responsibility here at school to help care for the Earth?

Invite student response. Answers may include: re-using scrap paper, could be recycling, energy sources (does the school use solar panels?), mass transit (busses vs. individual cars on the roads), picking up trash on school grounds, lights that shut off automatically, etc.

If students have a hard time thinking of anything, you can use these or other suggestions to jog their ideas. You may want to visit with an administrator to learn about all of the eco-friendly elements built into the school design or operations (or, to learn more about where deficiencies are).

What are some ways you show responsibility and care for the Earth and the environment outside of school?

Invite student response.

What is something you do on a fairly regular basis that is maybe somewhat irresponsible, and not that good for the environment?

You could give students examples such as: not using reusable grocery bags, using bottled water vs. a refillable water jug, using plastic baggies vs. reusable snack bags, not recycling, leaving lights on in rooms after you leave them, etc.



Empower

15-20 minutes

We are going to take the Go Green Challenge in our classroom and take an inventory of all the ways we can increase our responsibility and improve our environmental impact here in the classroom. You are going to get into groups of 3-4 and complete an Environmental Inventory. When you are done, we'll come back together to discuss changes we can make to be more environmentally responsible.

If you are able to send students to other parts of the school and broaden this to a Go Green Challenge in the school, that would spread kids out more and give them an opportunity to talk with other staff members (custodians, librarians, food service staff, office staff) and learn about what other important facets of the school do to reduce waste and be environmentally conscious.

Sending students around the school will require pre-planning, however, and may extend this lesson over more than a day.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Bring all the groups back together and have them present the results of their inventory. Discuss as a group 1-3 small changes you can make together as a class that will have a positive impact on the environment, the Earth, or the school's carbon footprint.

Connect the concept of self-discipline to this topic; how do we use self-discipline to take care of the environment? (Examples include: It can be easier to just throw things away vs. take them to the recycling center, it takes self-discipline to remember to bring reusable bags to the store every time, it takes self-discipline to remember to turn lights off each time you leave a room, etc.)



Extension Ideas

- If your students have access to technology (computers or iPads), they might enjoy playing some of the science games found here: [NNOAA SciJinks: Games](#)
- Depending on the inventory results, students may be inspired to start a larger class or school-wide initiative like recycling (or expanding the current recycling program) or planting a school garden or having a compost heap. Consider how something larger like this could also connect with science standards and dovetail into content curriculum for the rest of the year. In any case, students could report their findings to the principal, administrators, or even to the school board!
- Send Environmental Inventories home with students and have them complete the inventory for their homes.
- Schedule a nature walk to pick up trash or tour a local facility that is particularly environmentally conscious. Or, if there are companies that manufacture solar panels or other eco-friendly tools and products, schedule a tour or have one of their staff come and speak to the class.



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LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Environmental Inventory Worksheet

<p>On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the worst, 10 being the best), how well is paper and plastic being reused or recycled?</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
<p>What are some practices in this space that lead to unnecessary paper or plastic waste?</p>	
<p>How is electricity being used in this space?</p>	
<p>On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the worst, 10 being the best), how well is electricity being conserved when no one is using the space (i.e., are lights left on when no one is in the room)?</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
<p>Are there any “green spaces” (plants or other green/natural elements) in the room? If so, what are they? If not, what could be added?</p>	
<p>On a scale of 1-10 (1 being not much, 10 being a lot), how many things in this space are reusable (vs. use once and throw away)?</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
<p>What are some things that are reused and what are some things that can only be used once? Are single-use items wasted or do they have to be thrown away?</p>	
<p>What does this space (or people in the space) do well to help the environment?</p>	
<p>What could this space (or the people in the space) do better to help the environment?</p>	