



**KENT COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS**

## **WHAT'S IN YOUR WASTE?**

**A simple waste audit to complete in your classroom**

**Objective:** To identify the different types of materials in your classroom waste and then identify different ways to decrease that waste

**Grades:** 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>

**Time:** 1 day of collection and 1 class period of analysis

**Vocabulary:** Compost, landfill, recycle, upcycle, waste

**Materials:** Large trash bag, tarp, gloves, recycle bin, compost bin, trash can

### **Lesson:**

Over the course of a day, collect everything thrown away in your classroom in a large trash bag. The next day, begin by discussing waste. What is waste? Waste can be defined as anything that someone doesn't want anymore. Waste can include trash, recyclables, or food waste that should be composted. It can go one of three places in Kent County: the landfill, the waste-to-energy facility, or the recycling center.

Next, have everyone put on gloves and dump the waste that was collected onto the tarp. Sort it according to the categories listed on the waste audit worksheet attached below.

Once everything is sorted, take a look at how much is going to the landfill versus to the recycling center. Discuss ways in which your students could send less trash to the landfill. As a follow-up question, ask what actions at home or at school would lead to less waste?

### **Extensions:**

Add in the garbage from the cafeteria during lunch time. Does this change the composition of your waste? Where does food waste go compared to the typical classroom waste?

Complete another waste audit a week or month later after focusing on changing waste habits. Compare the results. Does your class have less trash going to the landfill? More items going to the recycling center? What actions did the students change in order to produce these results?

