



**KENT COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WORKS**

WASTE FREE LUNCH

(based on EPA poster "Pack a Waste Free Lunch")

Objective: Help students and teachers understand that "being green" involves making choices

Grades: 2nd – 6th

Time: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: Environment, "green," incinerator, landfill, reduce, reuse, recycle, trash, waste

Materials:

Wasteful choices: plastic shopping bag, plastic sandwich bag, individually packaged crackers or cookies, paper napkin, juice box, stationary note from Mom;

Waste-free/less wasteful choices: reusable shopping bag, reusable/reused sandwich container, grape stems or another fruit/vegetable with no packaging, cloth napkin, reusable drink bottle, scrap paper note from Mom

Background:

The term "green" is used frequently, but many people don't know what it means or think that it takes a lot of work to 'be green'. In fact, being 'green' is really about choices. The choices each of us makes have an impact (positive or negative) on the environment.

Simple activities, like riding on a school bus, keeping the school clean, turning the lights off, the landscaping on the school property, and throwing something in the trash all have impacts on the environment.

Being 'green' means that, before deciding to do something, you ask yourself, "Is there a better choice I can make that will be less wasteful?" The choice may be simple, but can make a big difference.

Lesson:

Discuss what it means to be 'green'. Ask students what they do now that impacts the environment; make a list on the board that can be expanded later in the activity.

If nobody mentions 'trash', add it to your list and describe how trash has an impact on the



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environment. Tell them that each person in the United States creates about 4.5 pounds of trash each day! Ask the students if they know where their trash goes. If nobody answers, explain that many adults don't even know where their trash goes. Ask if anyone has ever been to a landfill or incinerator; have a discussion about what the facilities are like and what their purpose is.

Begin a discussion about the amount of trash generated from lunch at school. Explain that you are going to show students examples of some choices they can make to pack a 'green' lunch, or a waste-free lunch.

From the materials, pull items out one at a time beginning with the grocery bag (since they have to go grocery shopping to get the food to pack a lunch). Discuss where the 'wasteful' items will go once used (usually in the trash) and where the 'waste-free' items will go once used (usually to be washed and reused or composted if they choose to do so at school or home).

When you have talked about each of the items, show the students how much waste was prevented from entering the landfill by making the choice to pack a waste-free lunch.

Ask if students have other ideas on things to pack in a waste-free lunch. How can they be more 'green' in their daily lives, both at school and at home?

Extensions:

Prior to starting the activity, ask students to save the waste from their lunch that day. Weigh the waste and write down the total amount of waste generated from the class/grade/school. After completing the activity, tell students that their homework is to pack a waste-free lunch for the next day (or to make waste-free lunchroom choices if they buy lunch at school). The next day, again ask students to save the waste from their lunch and weigh the waste. Compare the two totals and discuss the impact that the waste-free lunch will have on the environment.

As a class/grade/school, brainstorm ways you can become 'green' and make one or more of the ideas a class/grade/school project. Challenge other grades or other schools in your district to see who can be 'greener'. Finish the projects prior to Earth Day (April 22).