

Unit 3: Weeks of October 22 + October 29
K-3rd Grade
Reducing waste: what + why

Hello everyone! This week, we will be learning all about litter and trash- the impact it makes on our school, community and world. With overflowing landfills and China refusing our recycling, choosing reusables over disposables/recyclables is more important than ever. At Pioneer, most of the waste and litter comes from single use food packaging from snacks and lunches. We will be picking up litter around campus, examining it, and brainstorming ways to reduce their waste. Kids will see an example of a zero waste snack and lunch and be encouraged to think of ways they can take charge to reduce their own waste. I've included a script if you need it, but feel free to adjust and paraphrase based on the needs of your class.

Materials:

Garden chalkboard with itinerary + blanket for sitting
Cloth grocery bag with the lunch/snack reusables inside (in shed)
Pictures of waste and its effects
2 paper bags for picking up litter- 1 for recyclables and 1 for landfill

Opening Circle (10 minutes)

Invite the kids to take their seats on the blanket.

"Today we will be talking about trash and litter. If you look around campus, there's lots of little bits of plastic trash littered around. Unfortunately, litter (and especially plastic), can be a matter of life or death for animals and their habitats. I'd like to read to you a little about it while you pass around and look at these photos."

" Imagine the Pacific Ocean – tranquil blue waves under a clear blue sky. But floating just below the surface is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – an area twice the size of Texas filled with millions of pounds of plastic and chemical waste. Small fish eat this garbage, bigger fish eat the smaller fish and we eat the bigger fish, taking plastic particles and chemical sludge into our bodies. Litter finds its way into lakes, streams and oceans. Millions of marine animals die each year because they eat litter and starve to death because the plastic stays in their stomachs. Or they can get stuck in litter and suffocate. The worst kind of litter is

plastic bags and plastic six-pack rings, which trap marine mammals so they can't breathe. Half of the lakes in our country are unfit for swimming or fishing because they are so polluted. And polluted waters cause illness in humans as well. The United States makes the most trash out of any country in the world!" (edited/excerpted from this lesson: www.kidsciencechallenge.com/pdfs/Lesson-Plan_Zero-Waste.doc)

"As you can see, it's really important for us to take action to protect our communities, habitats, oceans, and the animals. It all affects us as humans, too! Can you think of some ways we can help reduce the amount of litter on campus? (allow for a few answers). One of the ways we can help is by both setting an example for others by not littering; and also, we can pick up litter that we see (that is safe to pick up) to make sure it gets properly disposed of in the landfill."

"Today, we're going to walk around campus and see how much litter we end up with! We will have two bags- one for recyclables like plastic bottles and clean paper, and one for landfill trash like food wrappers, straws, and plastic bags. I want you to be litter detectives! Pay special attention to what the most common type of litter is, and where it comes from. After we finish, we'll talk about ways we can make less trash."

Picking Up Trash + washing hands (15-20 minutes)

Following your lead, walk around campus and have kids pick up litter and place it into the bag (hold the bag yourself). Please do not pick up anything wet or dangerous. You can go anywhere you'd like on campus, but end up at the lunch area to place litter in the appropriate bin: either trash or recycle. On the way back to the garden, please stop at the bathroom and wash hands.

Alternatives (10 minutes)

Have kids sit back down either at the picnic table or on the mat.

Lead a discussion: "What was the most common type of litter that we found?" "Was there more or less trash than you expected?" (allow for responses)

"Did you know that much of our country's trash comes from packaging from our food? Lunches make up a significant proportion of that trash. On average, taking lunches to school in disposable containers make 67 pounds of waste per year per child. That ends up being 18,760 pounds of garbage from lunch per year for just one school!"

“So, what can WE do about this problem? Let’s brainstorm together. Can anyone think of a way we can make our lunches less wasteful?” (allow for discussion, prompting as necessary)

“Here I have an example of some tools to create a “zero waste” snack or lunch. (pull out reusables from the bag one by one, pass around if desired). Lunches and snacks can be packaged in reusable containers such as this one that can be taken home, cleaned, and used again. We can use reusable lunch bags and water bottles. We can make our own snacks or buy them from bulk bins in our own bags to avoid plastic trash. We can bring our own wood or metal silverware, and a cloth napkin. We can also make sure that any trash we do end up with makes it into the trash can.”

(depending on discussion length and participation, you may have extra time. In this case, feel free to let the kids explore the garden)

Closing Circle (5 minutes)

Express gratitude for the children’s help picking up litter.

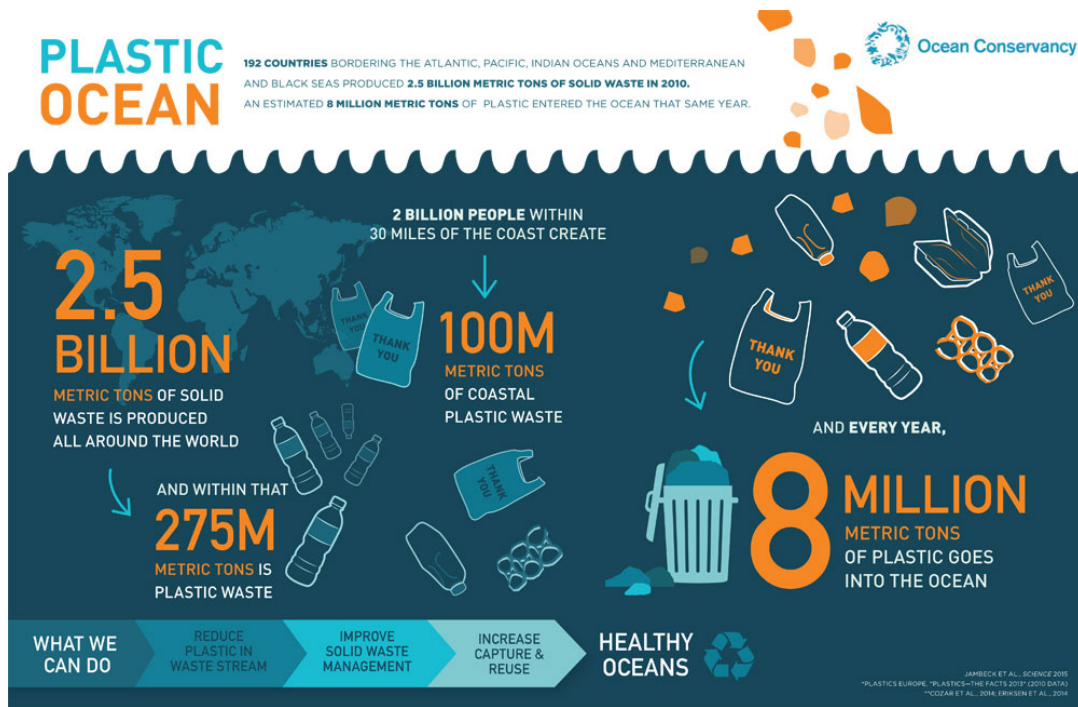
To end our class, we’re going to go around in a circle and I’d like you to tell me ONE thing that you already do, OR would like to do to help our earth/environment. I’ll start. I (bike to school, bring my own bag to the store, compost, pick up litter, buy secondhand, bring a reusable water bottle, etc.)



Sea animals often mistake plastic for food or get caught in plastic trash and get injured or die. <https://caspianmedia.com/plastic-pollution-business-ocean-build-customer-loyalty/>
<https://newrepublic.com/article/147988/global-crisis-plastic-pollution>



Plastic pollution disproportionately affects marginalized communities and 3rd world countries where it causes health problems. <https://www.thebetterindia.com/144234/india-inc-goes-green-pledges-to-fight-plastic-pollution-on-world-environment-day/>



<http://responsibletourismpartnership.org/plastics>