



Lesson Plan: Breaking the Paper Chain

Adapted from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina "A Paperless Trail" Lesson Plan – www.charmeck.org

Goal: Students will evaluate how they use paper products on a daily basis and understand why reduction is critical and better for the environment

Assessment: Students will become aware of different ways to reduce the amount of paper they use every day. Students will also create ways to encourage others to reduce paper use.

Age Group: Grades 4-5

Time: 1-2 hours, plus one homework assignment before lesson.

Materials:

- Supplies for team projects/lessons.

Vocabulary

Reduce – make smaller or less in amount.

Persuade – cause someone to do something through reasoning or argument.

Substitute – one that takes the place of another; a replacement.

Source Reduction – lessening the amount of material entering the waste stream at a specific point.

Background Information for Teachers

It takes large amounts of energy and many trees to make the paper we use so thoughtlessly every day. Even though we recycle much of the paper we use, it is still a significant part of what we throw in the trash. Much of that paper only has writing on one side and could have been used a second time, potentially cutting paper use in half. By using less paper, you can reduce up to 40% of the trash that is thrown away. Leading question: What can we substitute for the paper products we use and throw away?

Activity

- A couple days before the lesson, give this homework assignment. Ask students to write down every single paper product they use for 24 hours. (During school hours, be sure to point out any time paper is being used. This will reinforce the habit before going home.)
- For the lesson, divide the chalk or whiteboard into 3 large columns: Necessary, Not Necessary, and Substitute.
- Using their lists, students take turns adding paper products they used in the last 24 hours to one of the first two columns.
- When a good number of examples are given, the class then brainstorms possible substitutes for certain paper products. These are listed in the third column. (Examples: handkerchief, instead of tissue; cloth hand towel rather than paper towel; cloth napkins, lunchbox or reusable

canvas bag rather than a paper lunch bag; have a class “scrap paper box”; use both sides of paper, etc.)

- The class may want to make a poster of the ideas to display as a reminder.
- Discuss how others could help save paper if they were aware of the possibilities. In teams, have each group decide what they could do to encourage careful use of paper by others. Give time and materials for preparation and practice. (Could do a skit, a rap, a poster, a chart, a song, etc.)
- Present them to other classes.

Extensions

- Think of substitutes for other products we throw away.
- Think of other uses for these products that would prolong their useful life.

Minnesota Teaching Standards

4th Grade

Social Studies: 4.2.1.1.1, 4.3.4.9.1

5th Grade

Science: 5.3.4.1.3

Social Studies: 5.1.1.1.2, 5.2.1.1.1