



Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Pollution Prevention Champion

Pocatello Community Charter School

Pocatello, Idaho

2006

Waste Isn't Waste Until It's Wasted

In 2001, Amy Pikes' fifth- and sixth-grade class took on an unusual project entitled "Waste Isn't Waste Until It's Wasted." For two weeks, students collected garbage from every room in the school, measured the volume of garbage and sorted it into recyclable and non-recyclable items. The students spent weeks analyzing the data they collected and sharing it with their school. They then developed and implemented a recycling plan and program. As a result, they now have an active recycling program and have reduced the waste their school sends to the landfill by 30%.

Benefits to the School and Community

Math Education

Students used the data they collected to learn about measurement, the metric system and statistics. This project helped the students and teacher meet the new Idaho curriculum standards for math.

Teamwork

Students were divided into teams tasked with evaluating garbage from one classroom in the school, the office or the lunchroom. Students worked together to measure, sort and evaluate the school's garbage.

Education and Outreach

Students determined that in order for recycling to work, they must first educate their school about waste and recycling. Students shared findings from their two-week collection project with other classes and school staff through a display and presentations.

Action and Results

Students used the lessons learned about the school's garbage to implement a recycling and composting program. The school now recycles newspaper, plastic, white paper, and cardboard. On average, 10 pounds, or 1/3 of all trash generated at the school, is diverted each day from the local landfill.

Worm Composting

The students also experimented with worm composting to manage food wastes from the lunchroom. This project was integrated into the schools science curriculum. After a test period, it was determined that the amount of food waste generated, approximately 10 pounds a day, was too much for the worms to compost. The worms and composting kits have since been adopted by seven families in the Pocatello area who now compost their home food waste.

Information on this webpage represents examples of projects undertaken by the organizations only and does not constitute Departmental certification or approval of compliance at this or any other time with federal, state and/or local regulations, but is solely presented as an example of projects undertaken by organizations in order to prevent pollution and/or conserve resources.