

Plastic Food Packaging



Lesson Overview: People don't often consider the environmental waste that is associated with eating a meal. In this lesson, students will discover the amount of plastic in food packaging while comparing and contrasting a variety of school lunches. After a whole class discussion, students will have an opportunity to showcase their understandings in a small group activity.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Compare and contrast a variety of school lunches
- Design their own environmentally friendly school lunch

Materials:

- 3 lunches packed with a variety of items ranging from least amount of single-use plastic packaging to most amount of single-use plastic packaging
- small red, yellow and green stickers
- poster paper
- art supplies

Instructions

Activating Discussion:

Instructor will begin by starting a whole group discussion by showing students a picture of a landfill or ocean filled with trash and asking them where they think all of the garbage came from. Students will have many acceptable answers. Instructor can ask follow up questions once students begin to share ideas relating to food. Example questions may include:

- Do you think all food needs to come in a package?
- Why do you think some foods need to come in a package?

Learning Plan:

Instructor to display 3 packed lunches around the room. These will be packaged differently, but should be clearly "most plastic waste" to "least plastic waste" using a variety of packaged and non-packaged foods. Students to be broken up into small groups and have them walk around the room together and decide which lunch would contribute the most and least amount of plastic waste to the landfills.

See appendix for suggested items for each lunch kit.

Grade 1-2: Instructor will give each student a strip of paper that labels each lunch bag as A, B or C and provide each student with three stickers coloured red, yellow and green. After walking around in the small groups, students may then put their coloured stickers on the spots where they think the stickers go best. Red = most waste, yellow = medium waste, green = least waste.

As a whole class, the instructor can work in an appropriate math lesson on counting, graphing, etc.

Grade 3-4: Students to work on a variety of math problems associated with the packed lunches. These math problems may focus on a variety of topics, depending on what math unit they are currently working on. Instructor may choose to use these questions as a whole group lesson, or review of topics and skills already mastered. Some suggestions include:

- How much plastic waste is in each of the lunch bags?
- If 5 students in our class had a lunch that looked like this, how much plastic waste would they make all together?
- If a student (or students) had these lunches for a month, how much plastic waste would they generate?

Activity Options:

Students can be broken into small groups and be challenged to make 3 different delicious packed lunches that contain foods with minimal plastic waste.

Instructor: adjust the knowledge **application** and **assessment** to meet the needs of your students based on academic ability/grade level/assessment requirements, etc.

Appendices:

- 2.2.1 Landfill Photo
- 2.2.2 Lunch Bag Examples
- 2.2.3 Red, Yellow, Green response strips