

Responsibility for the Environment

This lesson reminds students of their responsibility to the environment. Students will evaluate how environmentally responsible they are at school through completing an environmental inventory. They will examine how materials are used, how electricity is conserved, and determine what could be done better to reduce environmental impact.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Perseverance

Lesson Timeframe

35-40 minutes

Required Materials

- ☐ Environmental Inventory worksheet
- ☐ “I Choose to *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*” by Elizabeth Estrada

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**
See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Evaluate how to be environmentally responsible at home and at school.
- Identify how well school spaces are using and conserving materials and resources.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

How much water do you use at school? Do you think about it? This week, make a conscious effort to conserve where you can- check the bathrooms for running faucets, wash items together instead of one at a time, and report any running toilets to the janitorial staff. Every drop counts!

Tips for Diverse Learners

- The worksheet requires a lot of observation, critical thinking, and writing. Consider pairing students ahead of time so that pairs are evenly matched and each group has an opportunity to be successful and to teach each other.
- If you do not feel your students can manage the freedom of observing other school spaces or even speaking with staff managing those spaces, keep the project confined to your classroom spaces.
- If you feel your students need a greater degree of autonomy and challenge, the inventory can include formal interviews and investigation of the companies the school contracts with for things like water, heating and cooling, and other operational systems. Students can investigate if the school is partnering with “green” companies and what the school could be doing more efficiently. Students can also investigate the larger school garbage and recycling system; how much compostable waste is generated and what is being done with it?



Share

5-7 minutes

Review the definition of **responsibility**: Being reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you.

Explain that while there might be unique things we are each responsible for, there is ONE thing that we are ALL responsible for. Can anyone think of what that might be? **Answer**: The Earth (or environment)!

Invite students to share why it is important to take care of the Earth.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

Read Aloud: “I Choose to *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*” by Elizabeth Estrada

Read Aloud Link: <https://youtu.be/5zu5jQspcT8?si=aj-7y3t-hLQEwlBO>

Ask:

- What are some ways that can we responsibly care for the earth and our natural environment here at school:

Answers may include: re-using scrap paper, recycling, energy sources (does the school use solar panels?), mass transit (buses vs. individual cars on the roads), picking up trash on school grounds, lights that shut off automatically, water bottle refill stations, etc.



Empower

15-20 minutes

For this lesson, students will create a Go Green Challenge for the classroom and take an inventory of all the ways you can increase your responsibility and improve your environmental impact here in the classroom.

Instructions:

- Have students get into groups of 3-4 and complete an Environmental Inventory (see sheet included with this lesson).
- When they are done, have them come back together as a class to discuss changes you all can make to be more environmentally responsible.

Note: If you are able to send students to other parts of the school and broaden this to a Go Green Challenge in the school, that would spread kids out more and give them an opportunity to talk with other staff members (custodians, librarians, food service staff, office staff) and learn what else the school does (or could do) to reduce waste and be environmentally conscious.

Sending students around the school will require pre-planning, however, and may extend this lesson over more than a day.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Bring all the groups back together and have them present the results of their inventory. Discuss as a group 1-3 small changes you can make together as a class that will have a positive impact on the environment, the Earth, or the school's carbon footprint.

Connect the concept of perseverance to this topic; how must we persevere in taking care of the environment in the face of a warming climate and extreme weather changes?



Extension Ideas

- If your students have access to technology (computers or iPads), they might enjoy playing some of the science games found here: [NNOAA SciJinks: Games](#)
- Depending on the inventory results, students may be inspired to start a larger class or school-wide initiative like recycling (or expanding the current recycling program) or planting a school garden or having a compost heap. Consider how something larger like this could also connect with science standards and dovetail into content curriculum for the rest of the year. In any case, students could report their findings to the principal, administrators, or even to the school board!
- Send Environmental Inventories home with students and have them complete the inventory for their homes.
- Schedule a nature walk to pick up trash or tour a local facility that is particularly environmentally conscious. Or, if there are companies that manufacture solar panels or other eco-friendly tools and products, schedule a tour or have one of their staff come and speak to the class.



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The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the [CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#).

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Environmental Inventory Worksheet

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the worst, 10 being the best), how well is paper and plastic being reused or recycled?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
What are some practices in this space that lead to unnecessary paper or plastic waste?	
How is electricity being used in this space?	
On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the worst, 10 being the best), how well is electricity being conserved when no one is using the space (i.e., are lights left on when no one is in the room)?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Are there any “green spaces” (plants or other green/natural elements) in the room? If so, what are they? If not, what could be added?	
On a scale of 1-10 (1 being not much, 10 being a lot), how many things in this space are reusable (vs. use once and throw away)?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
What are some things that are reused and what are some things that can only be used once? Are single-use items wasted or do they have to be thrown away?	
What does this space (or people in the space) do well to help the environment?	
What could this space (or the people in the space) do better to help the environment?	