

Lesson 4: Recycling – Roles and Responsibility

At a Glance:

In this lesson students are presented with a hypothetical recycling decision-making scenario. Working in cooperative groups of three, each group strives to reach a consensus decision. Each group devises a skit in which members role-play the hypothetical scenario according to their agreement. Summary questions are provided for further group discussion and completion as an assigned writing exercise.

Arizona Department of Education Academic Standards:

Please refer to the Arizona Department of Education Academic Standards section for the ADE standards addressed by this lesson.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- ☛ understand how to better negotiate through the process of group consensus
- ☛ clearly state their position on recycling as a personal choice
- ☛ determine when it is appropriate for them to take responsibility for the behavior of others

Materials:

- ☐ Overhead Transparency: *Recycling Scenario* – optional to photocopy one per group
- ☐ Student Worksheet: *Group Planning Sheet* – photocopy one per student
- ☐ Student Worksheet: *Summary Questions* – photocopy one per student

Procedure:

1. Display the overhead transparency, *Recycling Scenario*, and pass out the student worksheet, *Group Planning Sheet*, to each student. Read aloud this hypothetical scenario, along with the two group discussion questions. Explain to students that they will be meeting in groups of three to come to a decision on how to address this personal choice issue.
2. Divide the class into groups of three students. Instruct the groups to come to consensus on the two questions and complete the written responses to them. When this is done, have each group select one of the decisions and create a short skit in which members role-play the individuals described in the scenario.
3. Allow all groups time to complete the planning for the role-play. If time and space is available, encourage them to practice their skits. When all groups are ready, select one group at a time to present their skits to the rest of the class.

Hypothetical Scenario:

A student has just completed a short unit of study on recycling in a school class. As a part of this unit, the student receives a copy of the official city policy on recycling, which recommends the placement of certain items such as newspapers, scrap paper, and metallic and plastic objects in an official city container that is placed curbside each week. The student has become convinced of the importance of and need for recycling as an alternative to discarding items and having them go to the community landfill. This student and the student's family are friendly with their next-door neighbor. The student has
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done some minor chores and run errands for this neighbor. While walking to school, the student has observed her neighbor setting out trash containers and notices that they never contain any recyclables. The neighbor’s recycling container is always full. The student is careful at home to recycle all acceptable materials, but the student’s parents only recycle a few items, occasionally, or sometimes not at all.

Questions for Group Discussion and Formation of a Consensus Decision:

1. Should the student approach her parents about recycling? If so, why?
How should she approach them? If not, why not?
2. Should the student approach her neighbor about recycling? If so, why?
How should she approach her neighbor? If not, why not?

Role-Playing:

- Each group member should record the role he/she will assume when role-playing the scenario, as well as notes or comments to be used during the role-play.
- Each group should prepare a skit using role-play to act out the chosen scenario. The presentation should be limited to 3 minutes.

Group member	Role	Group Notes (ideas, words, phrases and points to mention)

4. When groups have all completed their presentations, hand out the student worksheet, *Summary Questions*, for further group discussion and completion for homework if needed. This assignment can be for each student to prepare alone, or each group can be asked to prepare a consensus statement that represents decisions and responses arrived at by all members.

Summary Questions (to be completed after group discussion and presentation):

1. What reasons might the parents have for not recycling? Are these reasons good reasons? Explain.
2. What reasons might the student have for not approaching her parents or neighbor?
Are these reasons good reasons? Explain.
3. What skills and qualities of character are most important in trying to persuade someone to take recycling more seriously? Explain.
4. What are the most important facts and information that the student should have when talking to someone about recycling and waste management?
5. If the city policy requires recycling, rather than merely recommending it, does this change what the student should do? Explain.
6. What other resources might the student have at her disposal in discussions with her parents or neighbor?

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Teacher Background:

This lesson requires students to engage in shared reflection on their convictions concerning a significant issue in society today--recycling. It also requires them to connect what they learn in a school classroom with their daily affairs. In the hypothetical scenario it is clear that the student believes that recycling is important, and she incorporates this in her own treatment of recyclable materials. However, the scenario raises another kind of question - one of responsibility. What responsibility, if any, does one have to attempt to persuade others to share, and act on, that same belief?

An interesting feature of the lesson is that students work together in small groups and are expected to try to reach consensus within their group. This is a valuable activity in its own right, since such cooperative practices are typical of much of what we must do in our everyday and work worlds. Striving for consensus requires listening carefully to others and trying to negotiate differences in ways to respect those whose views may be different. This often results in genuine changes in our thought. Others may bring up important matters that we would not think of on our own. They may challenge one's own conceptions. But this process also exemplifies some of the features of democratic life, especially those that require cooperative action even when there is not full agreement among those who must act together.

At the same time, insisting on consensus, particularly in controversial areas, is not always desirable. A consensus view is not necessarily more likely to be more adequate than a dissenting view. So, students should not be encouraged to think that consensus necessarily determines what is best.

As described in the procedures, this lesson requires groups to role-play attempting to persuade others to recycle. It is quite possible, however, that some groups will reach a consensus that, while the student should try to approach a parent, she should not (or need not) approach the neighbor. Alternately, a group might conclude that the neighbor should be approached, but not a parent. Also, a group might conclude that neither should be, nor need be, approached. For these groups, role-playing the student approaching a neighbor or parent might be difficult (although still worth trying). A possible variation on the lesson would be to allow groups simply to role-play whatever consensus they obtain. For example, the student could be portrayed as discussing with her friends why she is reluctant to approach either a parent or the neighbor. Or, the friends can be portrayed as trying to convince her that she should. And so on.

The final assignment, writing responses to the summary questions, is important because it requires students to put their thoughts on paper--after there has been much exchanging of ideas with others. This will encourage further reflection, and it will encourage students to refine their thoughts even further. This can be a group assignment, requiring an effort to formulate a group consensus statement (although it would be good to allow individual differences to be expressed as well). Alternately, each student could be required individually to write responses to the question.

Extension Activities

- Have students design a brochure which encourages recycling in the school or at home.
- Work in groups to conduct a survey of community members about their values and opinions on alternatives to landfills as a method of municipal waste management.

Source: Adapted from a lesson plan developed by Harvey R. Rabinowitz, Oceanside High School, Oceanside, Long Island, NY., 2000.

Overhead Transparency: *Recycling Scenario*

Hypothetical Scenario:

A student has just completed a short unit of study on recycling in a science class. As a part of this unit, the student receives a copy of the official city policy on recycling, which recommends the placement of certain items such as newspapers, scrap paper, and metallic and plastic objects in an official city container that is placed curbside each week. The student has become convinced of the importance of and need for recycling as an alternative to discarding items and having them go to the community landfill. This student and the student's family are friendly with their next-door neighbor. The student has done some minor chores and has run errands for this neighbor. While walking to school, the student has observed the neighbor setting out trash containers and notices that they never contain any recyclables. The neighbor's recycling container is always full. The student is careful at home to recycle all acceptable materials, but the student's parents only recycle a few items, occasionally, or sometimes not at all.

Student Worksheet: *Group Planning Sheet*

Name: _____ Class/Period _____ Date _____

Instructions: Use the following information as a guide to complete this lesson. Write your responses in the space provided or on additional paper if needed.

Questions for Group Discussion and Formation of a Consensus Decision:

1. Should the student approach her parents about recycling? If so, why? How should he/she approach them? If not, why not?

2. Should the student approach the neighbor about recycling? If so, why? How should he/she approach the neighbor? If not, why not?

Role-play:

- As a group, select one of the above scenarios to role-play.
- In the table below, list each group member and the role he/she will assume when role-playing the scenario; record notes or comments to be used during the role-play.
- Prepare a skit using role-play to act out the chosen scenario. The presentation should be limited to 3 minutes.

Group member	Role	Group Notes <small>(ideas, words, phrases and points to mention)</small>

Student Worksheet: *Summary Questions*

Name: _____ Class/Period _____ Date _____

Instructions: Write your responses to these questions after completing the study group discussion and presentation. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

1. What reasons might the parents have for not recycling? Are these reasons good reasons? Explain.

2. What reasons might the student have for not approaching her parents or neighbor? Are these reasons good reasons? Explain.

3. What skills and qualities of character are most important in trying to persuade someone to take recycling more seriously? Explain.

4. What are the most important facts and information that the student should have when talking to someone about recycling and waste management?

5. If the city policy requires recycling, rather than merely recommending it, does this change what the student should do? Explain.

6. What other resources might the student have at his/her disposal in discussions with parents or neighbor?
