

Service Learning Scenario # 3 Waste / Recycling Investigation

Set up – Your students conducted the PLT Waste and Recycling Investigation for Middle and High Schools. Even though they are already recycling paper and aluminum cans, they found a huge amount of corrugated cardboard and plastic water and soda bottles were going into the trash. They also discovered the school lunchroom threw away an enormous amount of Styrofoam lunch trays on a daily basis.

Question – What types of service learning projects can be designed using these findings?

Finding #1 – Have the students research the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing Styrofoam lunch trays and compare with other possible options. Design and conduct a survey of students listing these options (with research findings provided) for food service and collect comments on selection preferences school wide. Hold a town meeting at school to discuss options, inviting students, parents, teachers, food service staff, etc. Make recommendations to the administration for use of the most environmental / cost effective plan to the food service staff.

Finding #2 – Have the students research the current recycling markets for cardboard in your local area. (Often the cost of recycling cardboard is less than throwing it away.) Depending upon market findings for cardboard, work with local businesses and other institutions to cooperatively collect cardboard in a central location, possibly at a grocery store that has a baler. Educate the school staff (and community) about why and how to recycle the cardboard.

Finding #3 – Have the students research wastefulness of plastic bottles / bottled water usage. Develop a plan to eliminate plastic water and soda bottles from the campus. One idea would be to sell reusable water bottles at cost to students and community members to replace bottled water. If soda is essential to your school, switch to aluminum can vending machines. (Yes, they **are** still available!)