Clean up our school

Lesson plan description
Students will access the ‘Clean up Australia’ website to gain an understanding of the major sources of litter. With this knowledge, students will investigate the cleanliness of one or two areas of their school and graph their findings. Recommendations about school littering practices can be made.

Year levels
Middle Childhood (8-11 years)

Explicit values focus
• Care and Compassion
• Doing Your Best
• Fair Go
• Honesty and Trustworthiness
• Integrity
• Respect
• Responsibility
• Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion

Key Learning Areas
• Mathematics
• English
• Society & Environment
• Technology

Lesson plan

Getting started

Activity 1: How clean is our school?
In small groups, ask students to reflect on their current knowledge of littering in their school. Ask questions such as:

• Does littering occur in our school?
• Where does littering occur in our school?
• Are there particular areas of the school that are worse for littering than others? Why?
• What kind of littering occurs? For example, is it paper, plastic, cans, etc?
• How do you think our school compares to other schools in regard to littering?
• Are schools very polluted places?
• What kind of values does littering go against? For example, care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, honesty, integrity, respect, responsibility. Why?

Ask one student in each group to volunteer to be scribe and take notes from the discussion. Ask another student in each group to report back to the class.

As a class, discuss the similarities and differences in the responses provided by each group.
Discovering

Activity 2: Research litter

Ask students to access the ‘Clean Up Australia’ website at: http://www.cleanup.com.au and go to Information > Publications > Rubbish Report

Students study the graphic images of littering sources, types of litter and polluted areas, and write the answers to the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. What are the major sources of litter in Australia?
2. What are the most common types of litter found?
3. What are the most polluted areas in Australia?
4. Who is responsible for littering? Why?
5. Is it right that littering occurs? Why/Why not?
6. Should we tolerate littering?

Activity 3: Let’s investigate the sources of litter in our school

In small groups, students use their own prior knowledge and the information they have gained from the website to investigate one or two areas of their school, for example, the oval and one playground area.

Divide students into groups and ask each group to collect litter* from a designated section of the area so all the litter in the area is collected. Each group sorts the litter they have collected into various categories such as plastic, polystyrene, paper, miscellaneous.

Students could be allocated different roles in their group. Each group of students discusses the tasks that need to be completed and negotiates who will be responsible for each task. For example, some students could pick up litter, others could carry the bags and others could record each piece of litter collected so the information can be graphed later.

*For health and safety reasons, students should be advised not to pick up glass, metal objects or syringes. Check the school policy thoroughly so you are aware what to do if these objects are found and who is responsible for cleaning them up.

Bringing it together

Activity 4: Presenting the findings

Students compare the different types of litter collected from the major sources to the list. Using computers, they graph their findings identifying the sources of litter found.

In groups, students then discuss their findings by considering the following questions:

1. Where is the litter coming from? (The school community or from outside the school community, eg people passing by?) How do you know this?
2. Who is responsible for littering?
3. Why do you think this littering is happening?
4. Is littering fair? Why/Why not?
5. Does littering show respect?
6. Is how we treat our school grounds reflected in how we treat our homes, communities, the world? How?
7. How can we all make a difference and care for our school grounds?
As a class, students discuss the findings and make recommendations on how to use this information and how to make their school cleaner. For example, are more bins needed in any given area? Do students need to be reminded not to litter?

Ask students: What are you going to do about the littering?