

Plastic-Free Communities - Overview

Introduction

In this 6-week unit of learning, students learn why plastic is harmful to the environment and humans. They analyse the root causes of plastic waste and are given the opportunity to choose ways in which they can carry out collective actions in their communities, both outside and within their school, to tackle the problems they have identified.

They learn skills to enable them to work effectively within groups, such as facilitation tools and how to make decisions using consensus. Methodologies used include; walking debates, discussion, active research and group work to analyse and reflect upon relevant information.

This series of lessons are a positive, investigative, action-packed vision for tackling plastic over-consumption and production. This requires action not just at an individual or school level, but in our communities, local and national governments and at an EU level. The unit of learning will empower students to carry out their own actions and support existing campaigns in Ireland.

Time

Each lesson is 1-hour duration. The minimum time to cover the full unit of learning is 6 lessons x 1 hour each. These lessons can be adapted to suit the needs of the school however ideally for lessons 3+4 and 5+6, students would be allocated additional class time to carry out more in-depth group projects.

As such, this unit of learning is ideally taught as a cross-curricular project. It could be part of a wider project on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

12 – Responsible consumption and production

14 – Life Below Water

15 – Life on Land

How to use this resource

There are six folders, one for each of the six lessons, with a 'Teacher Notes' word document file and an accompanying PowerPoint to show to your students.

Read the 'Teacher Notes' in advance to prepare and guide you through each slide of the PowerPoint.

Where 'Activity' is written in blue on the top of a slide, there is a detailed explanation of what to do in your 'Teacher Notes'.

Some activities will require a photocopied handout which you can find in each of the lesson folders. Some handouts will be required for multiple lessons.

For lessons 4 and 6 there is minimal guidance given as you will need to respond to the interests, skills and decisions made within your own class to meaningfully support a student-led approach to the action elements of this unit of learning.

These resources are intentionally shared in a format so they can be edited and adapted to suit your school. Please credit original sources when adapting and if sharing with others.

This resource has been created by Kate Minnock, a teacher from North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School, as part of an Educate Together initiative. For more information please contact kateminnock@nwetss.ie

Table of lessons

Lesson	Time	Key areas	Learning Outcomes	Activities
1.	1 hour	How is plastic made? Ocean pollution.	Identify my existing knowledge and values about plastic and how my knowledge and values contribute to a sustainable community.	a. Plastic objects b. Plastic definition c. Walking debate d. Time to investigate plastic waste
2.	1 hour	Students own research. National and European policy and responsibility.	Present, using a visual prompt, one piece of research about a chosen plastic waste topic. Discuss, with evidence, what are the possible root causes of plastic waste.	a.Photo prompts b.Visual prompts c.One photo-one minute student presentations d.Root causes
3.	1 hour	Identifying the root causes of plastic waste.	Design and conduct a collective action in groups that addresses a root cause of a local / global sustainability issue (plastic waste). Identify and demonstrate a specific skill needed to carry out the action.	a.Diamond Ranking b.Tasks
4.	1 hour minimum. <i>Ideally 3-4 additional lessons to complete tasks</i>	Collective action to tackle the root causes of plastic waste in Ireland / EU.	Develop my existing skills and knowledge and understand how my values contribute to a sustainable community.	a.Tasks (Group actions)
5.	1 hour	School and individual responsibility. Group work using consensus decision making.	Design and conduct collective action in groups that addresses the root causes of plastic waste in our school using consensus decision-making. Demonstrate at least two new practical sustainability skills I have acquired in collaboration with others.	a.Consensus decision making b.Group forming
6.	1 hour minimum. <i>Ideally 3-4 additional lessons</i>	Collective action to tackle the root causes of plastic waste in our school.	Reflect critically upon and self-assess my actions and learning. Develop my existing skills and knowledge and understand how my values contribute to a sustainable school community	a.Tasks (Group actions) b. Hand evaluation

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