



WM Elementary Assembly The 4Rs Challenge

Teacher Discussion Guide

About the Assembly

WM's *4Rs Challenge* assembly show boosts your school's awareness of Rethinking, Reducing, Recycling, and Composting! This theatrical assembly takes your students on an adventure to learn about the 4Rs and encourages them to practice everyday actions to reduce waste in school and at home.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **The 4Rs** - Four steps to help the environment: Rethink if you need something, Reduce how much you use, Reuse things in new ways, and Recycle materials when you're done.
- **Natural Resources** - Something found in nature that people use.
- **Conserve** - Use something carefully so it isn't wasted.
- **Recycling** - Taking old materials, like cans, bottles, or paper, and turning them into something new that we can use again.
- **Composting** - The process of turning organic materials, like food scraps, into rich soil.
- **Contamination** - When the wrong item gets put into recycling or compost bins, making them unusable.

Use the "before" questions to prepare your class for the assembly. Use the "after" questions to reinforce learning following the show. And consider having students make observations during the performance to share afterward!

Did you know...

...that recycling one aluminum can saves the amount of energy it takes to run a TV for three hours?

Discussion Prompts and Questions to Consider

BEFORE the Assembly

- ☆ What have you thrown in the garbage recently? Could it have been recycled instead?
- ☆ What natural resources are used to make our stuff?
- ☆ Why might buying and using more than we need be a problem?
- ☆ Do we have to put everything we're done with in the garbage? What are some other options we may have?

Student Observations DURING the Assembly

- ☆ Where do the things we throw in the garbage end up? Do they ever really go *away*?
- ☆ What does it mean to rethink a choice?
- ☆ What questions do you still have about conserving?

AFTER the Assembly

- ☆ Why is practicing the 4Rs important?
- ☆ What belongs in our classroom recycling bin? What doesn't?
- ☆ What are some things we put in the garbage that we could reduce or reuse instead?
- ☆ Name one thing you **ALREADY DO** to reduce waste at school or at home.
- ☆ Name one thing you will **START TO DO** to reduce waste at school or at home.

Rethink Checklist

- ☐ Do I really need this?
- ☐ What will I do with it when I'm done with it?



PRACTICE the 4Rs!

Did you know...

...Americans use 50 billion plastic water bottles a year? Think about the resources that could be saved if everyone used a reusable bottle!



Classroom Actions

- ☐ **Create a reuse box for paper** - Add G.O.O.S (good on one side) paper to the box for others to use. Challenge students to think of other reusable items to collect.
- ☐ **Organize a supply swap** - Ask students to bring in extra materials such as school supplies, books, and reusable water bottles to share with the class or donate to the classroom.
- ☐ **Assign a weekly Classroom Waste Captain** - Task this student with checking the recycling bin for contamination and helping others remember how to properly sort.



Lunchroom Actions

- ☐ **Create 3D waste-sort signs** - Ask students to collect clean materials that go in the recycling or garbage. Attach them to a labeled poster and hang them above lunchroom waste bins to teach others how to sort correctly.
- ☐ **Hold a "Waste-Free Lunch" challenge** - Encourage students to replace single-use lunch items with reusable ones.
- ☐ **Create a share table** - Place extra, unopened food on the table to be shared with others instead of being thrown away.
- ☐ **Teach others how to sort** - Join a team of volunteers who stand near the waste bins and help other students learn which bins their waste items belong in.
- ☐ **Conduct a lunchroom waste audit** - Identify the most common materials that are sorted incorrectly and share what you learned!



At-Home Actions

- ☐ **Bring reusable bags when you go to the grocery store** - Identify other ways you can use something reusable instead of something disposable.
- ☐ **Repair, repurpose, or donate old items** - Find a new use for items like clothes and toys instead of throwing them away.
- ☐ **Compost your food scraps** - Turn unwanted food into rich soil that helps plants grow.
- ☐ **Teach your family** - Share information about how to reduce their waste and why it is important to use the 4Rs.
- ☐ **Be creative** - Find items that are about to be thrown away and come up with creative ways to give them a new life.



Find additional resources at:
wm.com/recycle-right
wmnorthwest.com

Sort Correctly!

Make sure your students know how to properly sort the things they throw away.



Recycle clean, empty, and dry plastic bottles, aluminum cans, cardboard, and paper.

Compost food scraps and wet or greasy paper and cardboard.

Put chip bags, candy wrappers, plastic utensils, and flimsy plastics in the garbage.

