



Guardians of the Environment

Becoming Guardians

Thankful Guardians

Creative Guardians

Grades K-2 Recycling Curriculum

Mission

Approximately 1,000 people move to Florida every day. The waste our growing population throws away is rapidly filling our landfills. Every day, about twelve pounds of waste, including garbage and recyclables, are produced for each Floridian. It is imperative that we educate our youngest citizens about recycling.

Due to the importance of this human responsibility, Chapter 404.714, Florida Statutes mandates solid waste instruction for schools. The statute states,

"(b) In order to orient students and their families to the recycling of waste and to encourage the participation of schools, communities, and families in recycling programs, the school board of each school district in the state shall provide a program of student instruction in the recycling of waste materials. The instruction shall be provided at both the elementary and secondary levels of education."

The lessons included in this "Guardians of the Environment" curriculum were curated to integrate these mandates with Florida state standards and benchmarks. While the amount of recycling continues to increase yearly in Florida, it is critical to help children learn how to take positive actions in their everyday lives. These actions establish good habits that continue into adulthood.

The mission of the "Guardians of the Environment" curriculum is to guide students to understand the need to make positive choices in regard to generated waste. The learning journey addresses these concepts through the lens of resource conservation and responsible management of our waste and builds student capacity to be guardians of the environment. The engaging activities within the curriculum provide students with the knowledge and tools necessary to defend resources and keep Florida thriving.



Overview and Rationale

Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny.
— Gandhi

Why is this K-2 curriculum important?

Teaching our youngest citizens to think about our environment, speak about the importance of being environmental guardians, take actions to help reduce solid waste by recycling, and have those actions become habits as they become the leaders of tomorrow is the rationale behind this curriculum. Our youngest citizens are determining the values they will carry into adulthood every day that they are in our classrooms. Helping them realize the importance of caring for the earth that sustains all living things is no small goal. It is, however, the goal behind this curriculum. That is the WHY behind this curriculum. Teaching our elementary students how to properly recycle is the WHAT of the Guardians of the Environment curriculum. HOW to teach these concepts became the brainchild of a partnership between the Florida Department of Education (teachers in Florida) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Integrating these important science concepts with the B.E.S.T. Standards allows teachers to utilize reading and writing benchmarks to deliver engaging lessons that help our K-2 students understand the importance, as well as the proper methods, of recycling. As students learn these concepts, they will share information with family members in their households, thus becoming the recycling experts who teach and encourage others.

Instructional Design

The Overview documents for each grade level give a synopsis of each lesson and list all materials needed to teach the unit. The lessons are designed to take approximately 30 minutes each to complete. The K-2 curriculum is scripted to help educators of varying experience levels deliver equitable learning experiences for all students in Florida. The resource documents provide step-by-step instructions for utilizing the engagement activities. Many of the lessons center around a picture book. However, in each lesson alternative text (in the form of digital content or an alternative picture book) is listed to allow teachers to implement the lesson if the suggested text is not available. The units are designed to build on each other so students can continue to increase their knowledge and awareness of recycling as they move through the primary grades.

The kindergarten unit, *Becoming Guardians*, teaches the foundations of recycling. Students will learn what recycling is and how it is done. They will also be introduced to the jobs adults do in the recycling process and what role students can take to become guardians. The first grade, *Thankful Guardians*, reviews recycling concepts such as sorting and helps students become more aware of the importance of our guardianship of



the earth. In the second grade unit, Creative Guardians, students learn more about recycling and are introduced to the concept of upcycling.

Although the units may be taught at any time, they were designed to be taught during the last quarter of the school year. The ELA, Science, and Social Studies standards listed in the lessons are explicitly taught. Other ELA standards and expectations will be utilized throughout the unit but are not explicitly taught within the lessons. The ELA Expectations ELA.K12.EE.4.1 (collaboration and active listening), ELA.K12.EE.5.1 (quality work), and ELA.K12.EE.6.1 (appropriate voice and tone) are examples that are stacked within the lessons but are not listed.

