

Direct Instruction: The Life Cycle of a Product

Objective: Help children understand how items are made, used, and disposed of, and how to think about their entire life cycle.

Materials:

- A toy or everyday object (e.g., a plastic bottle, cardboard box, or piece of fabric)
- Chart paper and markers
- Recyclable materials

Steps:

1. **Introduction:** Present an item to the children (like a plastic bottle). Ask, "Where did this come from?" and discuss the steps involved in making the object (raw materials, manufacturing, transportation).
2. **Discuss Use:** Ask, "What happens when we're done using it?" Talk about the potential waste it creates, and what can happen when it's recycled or composted.
3. **Create a Life Cycle Chart:** Draw a simple chart on the chart paper showing the life cycle of the object from creation to use, and then its end (landfill, recycling, or compost). Encourage children to add their ideas to the chart.
4. **Zero Waste Reflection:** Discuss how we can make choices to minimize the amount of waste created in the first place (e.g., choosing reusable items).
5. **Art Project:** Let the children create something new out of recycled materials, such as a bird feeder from a bottle or a collage from scrap paper, or a cardboard structure. This reinforces the idea of reusing materials.