

Recycled ROBOTS

Debra Cooper-Solomon

This past year, the fifth-grade teachers at the Mulready School introduced a unit on recycling. There were connections made in many different areas across the curriculum. During science class, students learned how long trash takes to decompose in a landfill. In social studies, they learned how different communities handle recycling and took a field trip to the transfer station in town. Skills were learned in math and language arts from reading charts and tables, and figuring out the time it takes for products to break down.

Students read articles about recycling and brainstormed slogans to persuade others to recycle. Some favorites were: "Whether it's plastic, paper, glass or tin . . . put it in the recycling bin." "Make your trash someone else's treasure. RECYCLE!!!"

Integrating Art

I thought this would be a perfect opportunity to integrate art objectives with the material that fifth-grade students were covering in the classroom, so I proposed the idea of creating robots out of recycled materials.

The first step was for students to begin collecting all sorts of "beautiful junk" such as egg cartons, meat

trays, toilet paper or paper towel rolls, yarn, fabric scraps, empty dish soap bottles, plastic milk jugs, coffee cans, buttons, beads, plastic margarine tubs, thread spools, and any other recycled materials they could think of.

Getting to Work

Next, students were given pencils and paper and asked to design a robot using the materials they had collected. They were asked to label which materi-

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als they would use for each body part.

I divided each class into six groups, with three or four students per group. Three groups worked on building the head and neck of a robot and the other three groups worked on the torso, arms, and legs. Each group was paired off with another group to which they would connect their robots.





Every class would end up with three completed robots. One of the requirements for the completed robots was that they needed to be secure and stable.

Once the robots were completed, they were brought outside and spray-painted silver. When they were dry, students hung their slogans on their robots. The completed robots were a perfect example of how a little hard work and imagination can create a masterpiece.

Getting the Message Out

When the robots were completed, we held a school-wide meeting with a recycling theme. Students displayed their robots, sang a recycling rap, and educated students in the other grades about the importance of keeping our environment clean. We

also started a recycling program at the school.

Afterwards, our robots were put on display around the school, at the administration building, and around town. It was our hope that these robots would encourage people to recycle and to become active in conserving the earth's resources.

Reflections

Students learned to work cooperatively with peers on a group project. Students were engaged in active civic participation by increasing their awareness of the solid waste problem, and by encouraging others to view the robots and learn how solid waste can be used as a valuable raw material.

Students also learned the importance of using the imagination, multiple perspectives, and personal interpretation. They learned to exercise creativity to promote risk-taking and problem-solving. Finally, students utilized visual and spatial concepts in planning works of art, working

three-dimensionally to create sturdy, secure, and balanced sculptures.

This project has been a huge success.

In addition to the learning that took place, we taught others how important it is to keep our part of the world clean, and that, with just a little bit of effort from a lot of people, we can keep our school, town, state, country, and the world safe and healthy for generations to come. ☺

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the classroom.

WEB LINK

www.ehow.com/how_2248882_make-recycled-robots.html