



Consumption and Waste

*Packaging | Bins and Dumpsters | Keep America Beautiful | Community | Behavior
| Reduce | Reuse | Recycle | Reimagine*

The United States is home to just 5 percent of the world's population; however it generates 30 percent of its trash. The average American creates a staggering 4.5 pounds of garbage daily. Almost everything we do creates waste, and as a society we are currently producing more waste than ever before.

Both *consumption and waste* have major environmental impacts. Producing goods and transporting them to consumers uses large quantities of fossil fuels and produces pollution, particularly carbon dioxide (the major greenhouse gas leading to climate change). When these products become waste, they are transported again, usually to landfills, where they produce methane (another potent greenhouse gas) as they break down, or to incinerators, which generate more pollution as they burn.

Driving Questions

- ✓ How can we, as waste managers, raise awareness of the life cycle of products at our school and how they impact our local economy?
- ✓ How can we, as members of the community, work with the city to create recycling and compost pick up or if our community has these programs how can we make them more efficient or accessible?
- ✓ How can we, as materials scientists, design products that address waste reduction and consumption habits for school and home?
- ✓ How can we, as mechanical engineers, design a machine that recycles community materials that can be sold to companies that use post-consumer products to create new products?



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

[Top 10 Tips](#) | [Fast Facts](#) | [Standards Alignment](#) | [Sample Action Plan](#) | [Consumption & Waste Audit](#) | [Lesson Links](#)