Reduce Activity

• discuss different kinds of packaging and its various functions
• determine what 3R options are locally available for various packaging
• introduce the concepts of sustainability, stewardship and renewable versus non-renewable natural resources

More Wrapped Up! (4-7)

Intro: Of the 7,000 items in the grocery store, about 3,000 are wrapped in packaging that ends up in the garbage. Packaging makes up about twenty percent of our household waste. There’s a growing realization that wasteful behaviours associated with throwaway packaging simply cannot go on (they are not sustainable). The resulting garbage fills our landfills, while the supply of some non-renewable natural resources is depleted. One strategy for reducing this burden is for manufacturers to show stewardship to take responsibility -- for the waste they create (see “Did you know?” box on next page).

Not only is excessive packaging a drain on natural resources and a problem for the landfill, it often affects our wallets. Individually wrapped portions of cheese and single serving juice containers are generally two to four times more expensive than bulk options.

Materials:
• various packaging materials (ask students to bring in packaging)
• a class set of department or grocery store flyers
• one product packaged three different ways

Activity:
1. At least one week prior to activity, ask students to bring in clean, empty packages. Store in the classroom. Include words such as “sustainability”, “renewable resources” and “non-renewable resources” and “stewardship” on the week’s spelling list (see 3R Terms)

2. Dump packaging on floor or table. Have individuals chose a package that interests them. Ask students, “Why do you think the manufacturer chose that particular package to contain that product?” (Reasons may include health, containment, safety, amount of garbage produced, cost, eye-catching design). Note reasons on blackboard. Ask, “What attracted you to that product?” Discuss the influence of marketing on why people chose different packages.

IRP outcomes
It is expected that students will:

[SS] Formulate strategies to address problems or issues (4)

[SS] Explain why sustainability is important (5)

[SS] Analyse the relationship between economic development of communities and their available resources (5)

[SS] Implement a plan of action to address community/national/global problems (6)

[SS] Evaluate effects of technology on lifestyles and environments (6)

[SC] Analyse how BC’s living and non-living resources are used and describe potential environmental impacts (5)

[SC] Determine how personal choices and actions have environmental consequences (4)

4. Have students brainstorm different types of packaging material (glass, paper, etc.), then place their packaging under the appropriate title. Discuss the purpose and advantages of different materials. Determine which packages are made from renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

5. Ask students to define “overpackaging”. Break class into groups and hand out flyers from a grocery or department store. Have students find examples of overpackaged goods. Discuss what they have found and what alternatives may be available.

6. Show students the different types of packaging used for the same items. For example, cookies, drinks, sugar and popcorn can be packaged in a variety of ways (bulk, concentrate, box, glass, aluminum, etc.) Ask, “Which packaging makes the most sense for the environment? For saving money?”

Conclusion/Discussion: Discuss ways to make environmentally-wise purchasing decisions by asking questions such as:

- Do I need this product? Can I repair, rent or borrow what I need?
- Can I buy the product with no packaging at all? If it has to be packaged, which product comes with the least packaging or packaging that can be reused or recycled?
- Is the package or product made from non-renewable natural resources?
- Is the package recyclable in my community?
- Use Myrecyclopedia online to find convenient recycling facility locations and get the environmental story behind the items we use in our homes and businesses. The tool was developed for residents in the capital region. www.myrecyclopedia.ca

Ask students, “So how do you know which package to buy?” “What do you need to think about before purchasing something at the store?” Encourage students to apply this criteria to products they consider purchasing on their next shopping trip.

Extension Activity: Take a tour of a grocery store and note items that are packaged in various ways. Also, note the price difference between the different packages. Discuss the reasons for what you find. Have students write a letter to a manufacturer explaining why they are concerned about a particular product’s overpackaging, and suggesting alternatives. Book a workshop and tour of Hartland landfill and recycling facility and/or download additional lessons at www.crd.bc.ca/teacher.