

projectgreenchallenge

pgc
2013

CURRICULUM

LESSON PLANS
FOR A
conscious
lifestyle

LABELING

Introduction

Reading is something that every child learns to do, but learning how to read a label is a critical skill that even many adults are challenged by. Understanding how to read a product label ultimately empowers consumers to become informed about what they are purchasing and consuming. That skill is imperative in order to sift through the products that are marketed to us as “natural” and “healthy,” even though they contain toxic chemicals in their ingredients list.

The number of existing labels – USDA Organic, Non-GMO, Fair Trade, etc. – may first seem overwhelming, but by developing an understanding of what these labels mean, you can choose products and brands that are better for health and the environment.

A specific topic that this lesson will highlight is the grassroots effort to promote the Right to Know GMO Labeling effort in many state legislatures, as well as on a federal level. This effort is based on the simple fact that as we educate ourselves about what we eat, we want (and deserve) more information about the products we consume.

Resources

- *[Pinterest Board](#)*
- *[Project Green Challenge 2012 Labeling](#)*
- *[Project Green Challenge 2011 Labeling](#)*

Objectives

In today's lesson, students will:

- Understand factors that influence consumers decisions to make purchases
- Differentiate between products that are genuinely ethical and great for the environment and greenwashed products
- Examine the whole story of GMOs and create a PSA to inform consumers about the students' findings
- Practice professional letter writing and taking action with Right To Know legislators around the topic of GMOs.

Materials Needed

- Powerpoint (included)
- Handout (included)
- Computer/projector
- Paper and markers for group activity

Lesson Plan

Below you will find a variety of classroom activities relating to the concept of labeling. Depending on your classroom or time you want to spend on the topic, you can select any or all of the activities.

Optional homework assignment for the night before:

Ask each student to bring in a product that they use on a regular basis. It could be a body care product, such as soap or shampoo, a non-refrigerated food item that has a label, a household cleaning product in a securely closed container, or any other item with a label to analyze. The students will use their items as they learn how to read labels; they will learn about verified icons (such as USDA Certified Organic) and about the ingredients printed on packaging. In case some students forget or don't complete the "assignment", bring several extra items that students can borrow.

Start of Class: 5 minutes

To begin class today, assess your students' label-reading abilities in a fun and unexpected way. Begin by revealing the introductory Powerpoint slide, which has a variety of products on it. Ask each student to fill out a sheet of paper and rank the products in terms of how much he or she likes the items, and if they would buy the product. If you prefer, you can bring in five items that you select. All of the following are recognizable, conventional brands.

Here is a screenshot of the five products from the Powerpoint.



On the corresponding handout, ask the students to rank the products in the order of which items they would purchase. They will write the number one by the item they would choose first, and number five by the item they want least. Then, they should explain why they chose the product. Is it because they know the product, because they personally use it and enjoy it, is it because they like the packaging, etc.?

Transition into the main lesson:

Raise the question "are labels important?" Generate a discussion about whether or not we need labels, what their purposes are, and the degree to which they benefit us as consumers.

Looking At Labels Activity: 30 minutes

Take the class into the computer lab. Each student (or pairs of students) is assigned one label to look up. Ask them to find the image of that label and print it out large enough so that it could be easily read if it were displayed in a classroom. They should caption the picture with the meaning of the label, the type of products on which the label would be, and if the label is verified and/or certified, and by whom.

Here is a list of possible labels:

- Animal Welfare Approved
- Aurora Certified Organic
- Baystate Organic Certifiers
- Bird Friendly
- Certified Biodegradable
- Certified Humane Raised and Handled
- Certified Vegan
- Demeter Certified Biodynamic
- Energy Star
- Fair Trade Certified
- FishWise
- Global Culture
- Global Organic Alliance
- Green Shield Certified
- Leaping Bunny
- Natural Food Certifiers
- NutriClean and Certified Organic
- Non-GMO Project Verified
- Protected Harvest

Lesson Plan cont.

Quality Assurance International
Rainforest Alliance Certified
Treated With Irradiation
USDA-Organic
World Fair Trade Organization

You can also look up labels that are important in your individual state. A great resource to use is:

greenerchoices.org

Guilty of Greenwashing? Activity: 10-15 minutes

In this activity, the teacher will display several products from the included powerpoint, and the students must predict (on their corresponding worksheets) whether or not they think the item is ethical. Ask volunteers to share and explain their ideas. Then, provide the correct answer, for students to write down, along with their reasoning.

Answer Key for the worksheet:

1. guilty
2. green
3. guilty
4. guilty
5. guilty
6. green
7. green
8. guilty

Transition: Screen the [Greenpeace video](#) on genetic engineering or another video that most resonates with you and share it with the class. Ask your students this question: Do you think we have a right to know what is in our food? Look over the infographics included in the Resources section with your students, and be sure to cover all the details.

Here are more possible videos:

[In the Dark about GE Food? Just Label It!](#)

[Just Label It: We Have a Right to Know](#)

[Do Americans Want GM Foods Labeled?](#)

[GMO Labeling Won't Cost You Anything](#)

[Bitter Seeds Movie Trailer](#)

[GMO OMG Movie Trailer](#)

GMO Activity: 50 minutes (5 minutes to introduce the activity, 30 minutes of work time, 15 minutes for presentations)

Using this [myths vs. truths article](#) about GMOs, break students into six groups to cover the different myths about GMOs, followed by the facts. Each group will read about one myth and the related facts. Then, they will work with their group members to create an awesome and informative PSA about their topic, which they will then share with the class in a brief, informal presentation.

The six topics/myths about GMOs are that they:

- are safe to eat and more nutritious
- benefit the environment
- reduce use of herbicides and insecticides
- increase crop yields, thereby helping farmers and to solve the food crisis
- create a more affluent, stable economy
- are just an extension of natural breeding, and have no risks different from naturally bred crops

Assessment/Checks for Understanding:

Writing Activity:

Now that your students have learned about GMOs, take it one step farther with a writing assignment. Ask students to draft a letter to their state legislator that reveals the truth behind GMOs. Students should state their opinion about whether we, as consumers, do have a right to know if GMOs are in our food, justified by a professional rationale. You will then collect the letters for grading purposes, and give the students the option to send their letters if they so choose.

This assignment could take one day in the computer lab, or could be assigned as homework. Depending on the ability level of the students, you can model strategies for writing a successful and professional letter. For tips, visit: right2knowmarch.org

Labeling Worksheet

name: _____ period: _____ date: _____

A. While looking at the five products, rank them in the order that you would buy them. Be sure to explain your reasoning! Think about the colors, size, shape, what the product actually is, how it makes you feel, or anything else that you think!

Product	Ranking (write 1-5)	Rationale (why did you choose this product)
A.		
B.		
C.		
E.		
F.		

Labeling Worksheet cont.

name: _____ period: _____ date: _____

B. Guilty of Greenwashing?

In this activity, you must decide whether each item displayed is actually an environmental product, or whether it is “greenwashed”. Predict whether or not it is a truly green product or guilty of greenwashing. Then, we will go over the correct answers as a class, and write down the reason for this answer.

Item	Prediction (Green or Guilty)	Correct Answer	Reasoning
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			