

Classroom Activity Menu

What happens after the assembly. A starting set of ideas for teachers, to be taken, changed, or improved on.

An acorn is the beginning. It needs time, attention, watering, and care.

Document	Detail
Edition	First edition. Founding year.
Status	Starting set. The Crew Lead Committee inherits this. See Section 2.
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Audience	Classroom teachers at Participating Schools

Follows the all-school assembly. Definitions used here, Participating School, School Crew Lead, and Program Year, come from the Counting & Membership Policy.

1 Before Anything Else

You are a professional and this is your classroom. What follows is a set of starting points, not a curriculum and not a script. Take one, change one, combine two, or throw the whole thing out and do something better.

There is no correct activity. That is deliberate, and it is the most important sentence in this document.

One suggestion worth taking

Before you plan anything, ask your class the question from the assembly, "What does keeping Maine beautiful mean to you?", and write down what they say.

The thinking behind it: ideas a class had a hand in choosing tend to get more out of them than ideas handed to them fully formed. Their answers will also point at which of these activities fits your particular group.

Those answers stay with you. Keep Maine Beautiful does not collect them, and holds no student names, ages, or writing of any kind.

2 Where This Menu Comes From

This menu exists to get you started. A blank page on top of everything else a teacher already carries is not a gift, so here is a set of ideas to react to. Borrow one, bend it, or use it to work out what you would rather do instead.

It is not meant to stay this way. It is intended to be designed by you and your students.

Through the founding year, School Crew Leads will work as a committee to shape this menu from what actually happens in classrooms. What worked, what fell flat, what surprised everyone. Teachers developing material for teachers will produce something better than an organization handing material down, and it carries its own adoption.

- **The Committee is advisory.** It develops and recommends; Keep Maine Beautiful adopts. Stated at founding so ownership is never in question later.
- **Tell us what makes it work.** What inspires. What fosters a love for Maine that stands the test of time. That is the report that matters, and it can only come from the people in the room.

3 What Earns an Acorn

Every student in your building has a sticker waiting. Whether it gets earned is up to them.

The standard, in one line

A student earns an acorn when they finish something they set out to do.

Not for attending the assembly. Not for good behavior. Not as a grade. It marks a piece of work carried through to the end, alone, in a team, or with the whole class together.

3.1 It does not have to be solo, and it does not have to be different

Twenty separate projects is one way to run this. A team with a shared focus is another. A whole class carrying one thing through to the end together is a third. All of them meet the standard, and which one fits depends on your group, your subject, and your time, which you know and we do not.

Work that counts, done together

- A whole class clearing a ditch or a stretch of roadside, start to finish.
- A team writing messages that get people to redeem their nickels rather than leave them on the ground.
- Commitment cards the class designs and takes home, for parents and brothers and sisters to sign and take part, carrying the idea out of the building.
- A bottle hunt, with the class working out what the haul is actually worth.

This is not	Because
A grade	It measures completion and effort, not quality. A struggling student who finishes earns one; a strong student who abandons the work does not.
A reward for attendance	Sitting in an assembly is not an accomplishment. Handing them out at the launch empties the whole thing.
Scarce	There is one for every student in the building. Nobody is competing for them.
Required	A student who does not want to take part still belongs here. No one is singled out for declining.

Award them in the classroom, at the end, when the work is done. Keep them somewhere secure until then.

4 The Menu

Organized by subject because that is how school timetables work, not because any of these belong to one subject. Each carries a note on moving it up or down a few grades.

ART

Draw the place you named

At the assembly, students were asked for their favorite place in Maine. Have them make it, drawn, painted, collaged, or built. The instruction is to make the place worth the effort someone would put into protecting it.

Up and down: Younger classes work larger and messier. Older students can work from photographs they take themselves, or in a medium they choose and have to justify.

WRITING

A letter to whoever comes next

Students write to the class that will sit in this room in twenty years, describing what Maine looks like now and what they hope has been kept. Seal them. The teacher keeps them, or the school does.

Up and down: Younger students dictate or draw with a sentence. Older students can write to a specific audience, a town council, a future selectman, a younger sibling.

MATH

The nickel problem

Every returnable bottle and can in Maine is worth five cents. Have the class estimate how many returnables pass through their own school in a week, then work out what that is worth over a school year. Estimation, multiplication, unit conversion, and a real answer nobody knows in advance.

Up and down: Younger classes count what they can see in one day. Older students can build the estimate properly, with sampling, error ranges, and a written defense of their method.

SCIENCE

How long does it last?

Students research how long different materials persist, paper, aluminum, glass, plastic, and present the range rather than a single number, because the honest answer is a range and the sources disagree.

Up and down: Younger classes sort materials into fast, slow, and forever. Older students can dig into why the published figures vary so widely, which is a genuine lesson in reading sources.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Who decides?

Maine's bottle deposit exists because people asked for it and the Legislature passed it. Trace how that happened, or follow a current question through the same path.

Up and down: Younger classes look at who takes care of what in their own town. Older students can follow an actual bill through an actual session.

OUTDOORS

A walk with nothing to prove

Walk a route the class knows, around the school, to the field, along a road with a safe verge. Take bags. Say nothing about who dropped what. This is the Community Crew practice: notice, put right, move on. No photographs of children holding rubbish.

Up and down: Younger classes stay on school grounds with close supervision. Older students can choose the route and plan the safety themselves, which is most of the value.

TAKE IT HOME

Commitment cards

The class designs a card to take home, something a parent, a brother, or a sister signs to say they will take part. Students decide what the commitment actually is and what would make an adult say yes. The whole class works on one card, or teams compete to design the best one.

Up and down: Younger classes decorate a card with one simple promise on it. Older students can test their design on real families and revise it based on what came back.

THE CLASS DECIDES

Something we have not thought of

Give the class the question and let them design their own response, then carry it out. This is the one most likely to produce something Keep Maine Beautiful learns from, and the one most likely to be remembered in ten years.

Up and down: Works at every age. Younger classes need tighter boundaries on scope; older students need almost none.

5 Two Worked Examples

Fuller versions of two of the above, for anyone who wants a starting shape rather than a sentence.

5.1 The nickel problem, roughly three sessions

- **Session one.** Pose the question: how many returnable bottles and cans pass through this school in a week? Take wild guesses and write them on the board without correcting any of them. Then ask how they could find out.
- **Session two.** Count something real, one day, one location, whatever the class chose. Compare the count to the guesses. The gap is the lesson.
- **Session three.** Scale the number to a school year and convert to money. Then the harder question: what would the class do with it, and does knowing the figure change how anyone feels about a bottle on the ground?

What makes it work: nobody in the room knows the answer at the start, including the teacher. That is rare in a classroom and students can tell.

5.2 Draw the place you named, roughly two sessions

- **Session one.** Students name their place again and describe it in a sentence, out loud, to the room. Hearing twenty different places said aloud is half the point.
- **Session two.** Make the work. The brief is not "draw a nice picture." It is "make this place look worth protecting to someone who has never been there."

Finished pieces can go to the Classroom Gallery. See Section 7.

6 The Innovation Track, Not Yet Available

Several teachers will reach the same idea independently: have students research the problem and design an improvement. It is the strongest idea in this whole program. It gives a capable student something worth their time, and it would feed Keep Maine Beautiful real thinking from people who see the system differently.

Why it is held

Keep Maine Beautiful's parent entity holds patent-pending inventions in exactly this area. Student-submitted design work touching those systems raises real questions, about prior art, about who invented what, about whether the organization could use a submitted idea at all, and about what a student and their family were told when the work was submitted.

None of that is a reason to drop the idea. It is a reason to sequence it behind counsel rather than in front of it.

Until this section is replaced, please do not set student work that proposes designs for redemption or collection systems. Everything else in this menu is open.

Design work of other kinds, a poster, a route, a school recycling scheme, a way to get more people to take part, is entirely fine and is covered by "the class decides" above.

7 The Classroom Gallery

Finished student work can be published on the Keep Maine Beautiful website. Sending work is optional and nothing is expected.

Rule	Detail
Credit	Class or school only. No student is published by name.
Selection	The teacher chooses what to send. Keep Maine Beautiful does not select from a larger set.
What to send	A photograph or scan of the work, and the class and school name. Nothing else.
Counting	Submissions are counted as objects, not as children. See the Counting & Membership Policy.
Withdrawal	A school may ask for anything to be removed at any time, without explanation.

Why no names

A first name plus a grade plus a named school identifies a child, particularly in a small Maine school. The Gallery is public.

The recognition that matters to a nine-year-old is local anyway. Their name on their work in their classroom, their teacher and their family seeing it. The acorn in their hand is the personal record. The Gallery credits the class.

8 At Year End

Your School Crew Lead sends Keep Maine Beautiful three numbers. Nothing else is required.

Number	What it is
Students in the building	Enrollment, confirmed at year end.
Students who did classroom work	One figure for the whole school, not per teacher.
Pieces sent to the Gallery	A count of submissions.

If you want to add anything about what worked and what did not, it is genuinely wanted and it shapes next year’s materials. It is not required and there is no form.

One thing worth knowing

Teacher-reported figures are never added together. Six teachers reporting on the same hundred students would produce an impossible number, so Keep Maine Beautiful counts at the school level and reports it once.

How every published figure is produced is explained in plain language on the website.

9 Open Items

- **The innovation track.** Held pending counsel. See Section 6.
- **Crew Lead Committee handoff.** This menu transfers once enough School Crew Leads are seated.
- **Worked examples.** Two exist. More will come from teachers, not from Keep Maine Beautiful.

10 Related Documents

Document	What it is for
Counting & Membership Policy	How schools and students are counted. Defines every term used here.
Assembly decks	The launch presentation this menu follows, in three grade bands.
How We Count	The public plain-language explanation of the figures.
Ready, Set, Go card	The one-page arc of the whole first year.

Maine is ME.