

GO WILD IN NEW YORK CITY

Conflict resolution

[Keeping your Garbage Bin Empty](#) provides a good opportunity to work on Conflict resolution in an authentic way. The purpose of the activity is to decrease, as a whole class, the amount of garbage thrown away during a week. However, not every student generates the same amount of waste, and it is possible that some students feel frustrated because others are creating more trash than them, which increases the class average.

At the end of the inquiry project, the class can conduct in a new activity to discuss this issue. The teacher will tell students that, in a certain community, all neighbors receive a fine if the total amount of garbage exceeds certain value. The community has received three consecutive fines, and therefore neighbors want to reduce the total amount of waste. The problem is that it is known that some neighbors usually throw away more garbage than others, and the people who throw away less feel it is not fair to them to receive the fine. How can they solve this situation?

Ask some students to play the role of the neighbors who throw away more garbage than others. Ask others to play the role of the residents who throw less waste. Another group of students will be the Local Environmental Authority, who gives the fines for garbage excess. It is important to mention that the goal of the activity is not to be “right” or “win” the debate but to solve the community problem and avoid receiving fines. Some ideas that can be used in the negotiation are, for example, to have students make a list of the reasons why other neighbors throw away more/ less garbage than them, taking the other’s perspective (for example, Ms. Smith generates more garbage because she has two babies). Also, to have students create a list of the ways others could reduce the amount of waste generated (for example, using less disposable utensils). Finally, all neighbors can unite to negotiate with the Local Authority the possibility of raising the amount of garbage permitted due to the particular needs of their community. At the end of this activity, it is important to go back to the initial discussion regarding the ways the class as a whole can contribute to decrease the average amount of garbage generated.