

Learning Situation

Smart Campaigns for Responsible Toilet Use

Many people are unaware of how everyday behaviours, such as what is flushed down the toilet and sink, affect sewage systems, water quality, and public health. Items like wet wipes, sanitary products, fats, oils, or chemicals are often incorrectly disposed of through toilets or drains, causing blockages, sewer overflows, and pollution of rivers and seas.

As cities grow and face increasing pressure from climate change and population growth, well-functioning sewage systems become essential for protecting the environment and ensuring clean water and sanitation. Raising awareness and changing behaviour — especially among young people — is therefore a key part of making cities more sustainable and resilient.

This Learning Situation invites students to explore how educational campaigns can be designed to effectively inform young people about responsible toilet and sink use and to explain why these behaviours matter for sewage systems and the wider urban environment.

Driving Question

How can an educational campaign be designed to effectively raise awareness among young people about what can and cannot be flushed down the toilet and sink, and why this matters for sewage systems?

Scenario

Local authorities and water management services are concerned about increasing damage to sewage systems caused by improper waste disposal. Blockages, overflows, and water pollution lead to high maintenance costs, environmental harm, and risks to public health.

To address this issue, local stakeholders are seeking educational initiatives that can help young residents better understand how sewage systems work and how individual behaviour impacts urban infrastructure and the environment.

As local students, you have been asked to design an educational campaign aimed at young people. The campaign should communicate clear, accurate messages about responsible toilet and sink use in an engaging and accessible way.

Task

Students design an evidence-based proposal responding to the local authorities' call for educational solutions. Working in groups, they develop an educational campaign — for example a digital campaign, school-based initiative, social media strategy, or multimedia communication concept — aimed at young people.

The goal is to demonstrate that the campaign is feasible, age-appropriate, and effective in raising awareness about sewage systems, correct waste disposal, and their importance for sustainable and healthy cities.

This activity implies a holistic approach.

Students explore the Driving Question by considering several interconnected aspects of designing an effective campaign — such as understanding how sewage systems function, identifying common misconceptions, analysing young people's media habits, developing clear messages, and selecting appropriate communication channels.

This Learning Situation is intentionally broad and flexible, allowing each group of students to choose the format and tone of their campaign and to adapt it to their local context. This encourages students to take ownership of their inquiry, combine scientific knowledge with communication skills, and propose realistic awareness-raising strategies.

To support this process, teachers may use the Lesson Plan developed for this topic, which guides the activity step by step while leaving students with agency to steer their own work and learning.

[Link to LESSON PLAN](#)

Alternative Approaches

In addition to the approach described in the Task above, we also propose alternative ways of implementing the Learning Situation. When choosing one of these alternative options, the Lesson Plan developed for the main Driving Question can still serve as a reference, but it should be adapted to match the different structure and focus of the chosen approach.

1. Single-Challenge Approach

Teachers may choose to focus the activity on **one single specific greening issue** that is particularly relevant to the local context.

This option is often easier to manage because:

- **it may require less time**, since the class concentrates on a single well-defined challenge;
- **it simplifies planning**, as all students work within the same theme;
- **it increases local relevance**, allowing teachers to select a challenge that is meaningful and visible in the school's immediate surroundings.

In the single-challenge approach, all student groups will work on the same overarching urban sustainability challenge. To provide focus and structure, each group can be assigned one of four perspectives to guide their investigation:

- **Where:** Investigating and describing the current state
- **Who:** Exploring community needs and preferences, including residents, schools, and local businesses.
- **Why:** Examining and describing the specific environmental challenges
- **How:** Identifying feasible types of planting, design interventions, or other practical solutions.

This structure allows students to **specialise in one dimension of the challenge** while maintaining a shared focus. At the end of the research phase, the groups will **come together to combine their findings**, creating a comprehensive understanding of the issue and collaboratively proposing informed, well-rounded solutions.

Suggested Local Challenges (What can be done...?)

Reducing sewer blockages caused by improper flushing

Students investigate which items most commonly cause blockages in local sewage systems.

What can be done to clearly communicate what should and should not be flushed down the toilet?

Improving understanding of how sewage systems work

Students explore how wastewater is collected, treated, and released back into the environment.

What can be done to make sewage systems easier to understand for young people?

Preventing water pollution from household waste

Students analyse how incorrectly disposed waste affects rivers, lakes, and seas.

What can be done to raise awareness of the environmental consequences of flushing the wrong items?

Encouraging long-term behaviour change among young people

Students examine why awareness does not always lead to action.

What can be done to design messages that are memorable and influence everyday habits?

Connecting personal behaviour to city-wide sustainability goals

Students explore links between sanitation, public health, and sustainable cities.

What can be done to show how responsible toilet use contributes to cleaner, healthier urban environments?

2. Developing Your Own Learning Situation

Teachers may design their own Learning Situation within this topic by narrowing the focus to a specific setting, such as schools, public buildings, sports facilities, or public toilets. Teachers may also collaborate with local water utilities or environmental organisations to identify a concrete and locally relevant challenge.

A good Driving Question should:

- be relevant and motivating for students;
- be feasible within available time and resources;
- support structured group work;
- involve accessible stakeholders;
- be linked to at least one of the project competences.

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