Activity: What's Your Top 5?

Topic: Most Common Litter Items
TEKS: S.(1-5).2

Background: <watch the SPLASh video on the Top 5 Most Common Litter Items>

Litter is unfortunately a frequent site along our waterways and coastlines. However, some items are seen more often than others. The five most common litter items that SPLASh picks up along our area coastlines include:

5. Food wrappers and containers (in which category they also included items like straws and to-go beverage containers)

4. Fishing lines, nets and lures

3. Plastic bags

2. Beverage containers (including plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and glass bottles)

1. Trash fragments

Each of these items can be prevented from becoming litter by disposing of them properly, recycling items when possible, and using sustainable non-single-use alternatives when available.

Materials:

- Notebook or electronic device
- Calculator

Instructions:

Part 1 – What's Your Top 5?

1. During your Backyard to Bay Trash Bash cleanup, record the different types of trash you pick up and the amounts of each.
   a. Determine your categories: SPLASh combined a few items into the same category (like [plastic bottles, glass bottles, and aluminum cans] or [coffee cups, straws, food wrappers]) but you can keep them separate if you want to be more specific.
   b. In your notebook or on your electronic device make entries for all the items you expect to find but leave room in case you run across items you didn't expect or think of.
   c. Some common litter items not mentioned in the video include cigarettes, balloons, six-pack plastic rings, toys, etc.

    d.   During your cleanup, making tally marks for each item might be the easiest way to keep track so you don't have to go through all of the trash afterwards.

2. After you tally all of the litter you picked up for your location, determine what your Top 5 litter items were.
3. Depending on grade level, use the litter item tally to determine what percentage of your total litter each category makes up.

Part 2 – Discuss/Report

Depending on grade level and current learning environment, choose from the following report/discussion options:

1. Report your Top 5 most littered items.

2. Create a graph representing the breakdown of litter categories from your cleanup.

3. Discuss why your Top 5 might be different or the same as SPLASh's Top 5 based on where you cleaned up. What factors might influence the type of trash you found most at your site? Example: Nearness of fast-food or other restaurants, a recent event, etc.

4. Compare your Top 5 with the Top 5 list of other students in your class and discuss why they might be different or similar.