Essay #1 Recycling: A Problem/Solution Essay

Now that we have reached the year 2006, the question of how we are impacting a sustainable ecosystem has been surpassed by thoughts about what we can do to solve the problems that have become a threat to our very existence. Although we may not have all of the answers, looking closely at an environmental problem that affects us all is a good step in the right direction.

We have now read lots of information about the problems with landfills (loss of space, decrease in biodegradability, toxic leachate) and the benefits of diversion (reducing, reusing, recycling). For this essay, please analyze the problem of waste disposal, exposing both the problem and the impact of the problem on the community (either local or global) as well as evaluating possible solutions found in recycling, and finally defend what you think is the best solution(s). Your essay must include support from the math recycling activity as well as support from the various readings we have done in class. You must also create a graph or chart that supports a) the problem of waste disposal and b) the solution via recycling.

Please include at least 4-6 outside sources but no more than 10, all of which must be included in an MLA formatted works cited page at the end of the paper.

Length: 5-6 pages

Rough draft due: 3/15 (bring three copies of your rough draft for peer editing)  
Final draft due: 3/27 (attach tutor conference sheet and one copy of rough draft)

Note:  
*You must see a tutor in the writing center while working on the rough or final draft of this essay and attach your tutor conference sheet to the final draft along with a copy of your rough draft and peer review worksheets.

*Read the following information about writing a problem-solution essay for guidelines.
Eng. 1A/Lawlor

An Environmental Problem-Solution

Problem-Solution essays (or, as they may also be referred to, Proposing Solutions or Proposal essays) serve an important role. These essays inform readers about problems and suggest actions that could be taken to remedy these problems. People write proposals every day in business, government, education, and other professions. Proposals are a basic ingredient of the world's work.

As a special form of argument, problem-solution essays have much in common with position essays. Both analyze a subject and take a definite stand on it. Both seek to convince readers to share this position by giving reasons and evidence and by acknowledging readers' likely objections or questions. Proposals, however, go beyond inviting readers to share the writer's views; they urge them to support a particular policy or take specific action. They argue for a proposed solution to a problem, succeeding or failing by how well they argue for the solution.

To most disciplines and professions, problem solving is a basic way of thinking. For example, scientists use the scientific method, a systematic form of problem solving; political scientists and sociologists propose solutions to troubling political and social problems; engineers regularly employ problem-solving techniques to build bridges, automobiles, or computers; attorneys find legal precedents to solve their clients’ problems; teachers continually make decisions about how to help students with specific learning problems; counselors devote themselves to helping clients solve personal problems; business owners or managers define themselves as problem-solvers. Problem solving depends on a questioning attitude, what is called critical thinking. In addition, it demands imagination and creativity. To solve a problem, you need to see it anew, to look at it from new angles and in new contexts.

Since a proposal tries to convince readers that its way of defining and solving the problem makes sense, proposal writers must be sensitive to readers' needs and expectations. As you plan and draft a proposal, you will want to determine whether your readers are aware of the problem and whether they recognize its seriousness. In addition, you will want to consider what they might think of any other solutions. Knowing what your readers know, what their assumptions and biases are, what kinds of arguments will be appealing to them is a central part of proposal writing, indeed of all good argumentative writing.

Audience and Essay Models
Your audience is the group you are writing to; most English essays are written with the expectation that your instructor is your audience, but this is not always the case, even though she/he will be reading it. For this essay, decide on an individual or group who could take action on your proposed solution, and figure out how you would go about convincing this audience that the problem is serious and must be solved and that your proposed solution is feasible and should have their support. Consider carefully what questions readers might ask about your solution and how they might object to it.
Basic Features of Problem-Solution/Proposal Essays
(From The Concise Guide to Writing by Axelrod and Cooper, 1993, St. Martin's Press)

A Well-Defined Problem
A proposal is written to offer a solution to a problem. Before presenting the solution, a proposal writer must be sure that readers know what the problem is. The writer may also have to establish that the problem indeed exists and is serious enough to need solving. Sometimes a writer can assume that readers will recognize the problem. At other times readers may not be aware of the problem.

A Proposed Solution
Once the problem is established, the writer must present and argue for a particular solution. Be sure that your topic is narrow and that your solutions are reasonable.

A Convincing Argument
The main purpose of a proposal is to convince readers that the writer's solution is the best way of solving the problem. Proposals argue for their solutions by trying to demonstrate:
that the proposed solution will solve the problem
that it is a feasible way of solving the problem
that it stands up against anticipated objections or reservations
that it is better than other ways of solving the problem

A Reasonable Tone
Regardless of the proposal or the argument made on its behalf, problem-solution writers must adopt a reasonable tone. The objective is to advance an argument without "having" an argument. The aim is to bridge any gap that may exist between writer and readers, not widen it.

Writers can build such a bridge of shared concerns by showing respect for their readers and treating their concerns seriously. They discuss anticipated objections and reservations as an attempt to lay to rest any doubts readers may have. They consider alternative solutions as a way of showing they have explored every possibility in order to find the best possible solution.

Most important, they do not attack those raising objections or offering other solutions by questioning their intelligence or goodwill.