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Class activity concerning population and consumption

Description:

This activity is an in-class activity that can help students to understand the relationship between population and consumption, globally. The goal is to help students move beyond a focus solely on "overpopulation" as an explanation of environmental harm, but to understand the relationship between population and consumption.

Students are divided into groups that represent nation states (Japan, United States, India, and China). The groups should be sized according to the populations of those nations at whatever ratio the instructor chooses. This will mean the India and China groups are the largest, with the Japan group the smallest.

Students are given candy or some other item in amounts that represent the consumption patterns of those nation states. The instructor can choose the ratios of this (something like one Hershey kiss equals 100 pounds of CO_2 emission). This will mean that the students representing Japan and the United States will end up with much more of the candy than the students representing India and China, even though those nations might have more overall.

Considerations:

- Instructors should decide ahead of time how many students will be in each national group, depending on the enrollment of the class
- Instructors should decide ahead of time how much candy will be given to represent each resource
- Based on experience, I would recommend counting out the candy before class and having it already divided into bags or other containers, otherwise you can end up spending too much time counting candy in front of everyone
- I have included a powerpoint that I have used and a spreadsheet that I have used to make and display these calcuations, you can adjust it as needed