



FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER



The Zero Waste Schools newsletter will help you get your school on a path toward generating zero waste through waste prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery. You'll also find resources that connect zero waste to healthy eating, school gardens, and environmental education and action.

Feel free to share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students who are interested in zero waste!

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

WASTE PREVENTION

Small Change Leads to Big Waste Reduction in Oak Park District 97



If you've ever eaten in a school cafeteria, you have probably encountered a spork packet. It's a little plastic bag that typically comes with a combo spoon-fork utensil, a straw, and a tiny folded napkin, all in one convenient packet. It is ready for a student to grab and have everything they need-- or don't need.

At best, the contents of the spork packets may get 15 minutes of use before being tossed and persisting for centuries in a landfill or as litter. At worst, the spork or straw may not get used at all when a student needs only a napkin. Single-use

plastics comprise half of the roughly 300 million tons of plastics produced each year globally, according to the [UN Environment Program](#). Much of this plastic is either not recyclable or just not recycled and instead finds its way to all areas of the Earth. If current trends continue, our oceans could contain more plastic than fish by weight by 2050.

Oak Park School District 97 (D97) decided to take action. In the fall of 2018 district administration, [Seven Generations Ahead](#), food service staff, Green Team parent leaders, and students concerned about plastics pollution collaborated to unbundle spork packets. Since D97 food service (as well as food packaging and sporks) is provided through D200 Oak Park and River Forest High School, collaboration among both district food services was key. Instead of being provided a spork packet, students are now offered individual sporks and napkins that they can take or leave, and straws are only provided upon request or for students with special needs. This small change in the spork packet has resulted in a big reduction in plastic waste.

Read more [HERE](#).

Reusable Packaging Pilot with Major Manufacturers



TerraCycle, a leader in recycling hard-to-recycle materials, has unveiled what it believes will be a revolutionary change in packaging: Loop. Debuted at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland this week, the new shopping system is the first of its kind to offer hundreds of name brand products in reusable and refillable packaging.

Read the full articles:

- CNN: [How to solve the world's plastics problem: Bring back the milk man](#)
 - Waste Dive: [TerraCycle promises 'future of consumption' with Loop reuse system](#)
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Food Waste Reduction Resources

The USDA's National School Lunch Program serves 30 million kids every school day, but \$5 million worth of edible food is wasted each day. Food waste is getting an increasingly amount of attention, and schools can start doing something about it today. Here are a few new resources to help schools reduce food waste:

- [Wasting Less Food in K-12 Settings: Best Practices for Success, November 2018](#)
- [TRUE FOOD NO WASTE: A Food Waste Action Plan for Minneapolis Public Schools, January 2019](#)

For insight into how one school district is reducing waste, check out "[How Oakland became a leader in cutting school food waste](#)".

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Youth Activism



16-year-old Greta Thunberg is a Swedish climate activist who has become a prominent figure in the climate movement. This past August, she led the first school protest for climate outside the Swedish Parliament. She has since participated in the Rise for Climate demonstration in Brussels and addressed the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December. She has been an inspiration in showing you can be a change making activist at any age. To learn more about Greta and to hear her powerful speeches, check out these links:

- [Speech at UN Climate Change COP24 Conference](#)
- [TEDxStockholm Talk: School strike for climate – save the world by changing the rules](#)
- [Special Address, Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum 2019](#)
- [Greta Thunberg's Demand to Davos Elite: Act Urgently on Climate for the "Sake of This Beautiful Living Planet"](#)

Chicago River Student Congress 2019



The Chicago River Student Congress is a "conference for kids" during which students come together to celebrate the Chicago River. Students share their knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm with their peers. Students attend informative workshops and view displays created by other students and by professionals from local colleges, nonprofits, and government agencies.

The conference will take place on **Saturday, March 2**, 8:00 am – 1:00 pm at Von Steuben Metro Science Center, 5039 N. Kimball Ave, in Chicago.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

COMPOSTING & RECYCLING

The Soil Story Curriculum

Introduce young people to the magic of soil and the fascinating connection it has to the food we eat, our health, and our climate with this middle school curriculum from Kiss the Ground. The 5-lesson curriculum, written to serve as supplemental material for the Next Generation Science Standards, teaches about the carbon cycle, photosynthesis, soil science, various agricultural practices, and concludes with a regenerative soil-based project.

Download the curriculum [HERE](#).

Cafeteria Trash is Cash! Webinar

Are you seeking to reduce waste disposal costs while also diverting valuable materials from the landfill? A school cafeteria recycling program can reduce the volume of garbage and save money, and a successful cafeteria recycling program includes recycling milk and juice cartons. Through partnerships, promotions, and grants, the Carton Council can help your school cafeteria recycling program achieve success from a financial and environmental perspective.



Join the [Carton Council](#), in coordination with the [Recycling Association of Minnesota](#), for this free webinar to learn more about how you can establish a school cafeteria recycling program with tips and best practices on how to collect milk and juice cartons as well as other cafeteria recyclables.

Speakers:

- Debbi Dodson, Schools Recycling Coordinator, Carton Council
- Dale Rhodes, Operations Supervisor, Middleton–Cross Plains Area Schools
- Susan Schuller, Development, Education & Outreach Coordinator, Recycling Connections
- Jodi Taitt, Founder & Principal Consultant, EcoConsilium, Inc

Date: February 12, 9 AM CST

Register [HERE](#).

Guide to Onsite Composting at Schools



Do you want to have on-site composting at your school but don't know how to get started? The Institute for Local Self-Reliance created a [Guide to Composting Onsite at Schools](#) that walks you through the basics of onsite composting at K-12 schools that have been equipped with 2- and 3-bin composting systems. These systems work well for schools with gardens. Learn why composting is important, the basic ingredients needed to produce good compost, steps to get started, and how to troubleshoot should problems arise.

SCHOOL GARDENS

The City of Chicago, Chicago Public Schools and the Seeds of Change Brand Announce a \$500,000 Grant to Support Eat What You Grow



City of Chicago officials joined United States Senator Dick Durbin, Chicago Public Schools and Mars Food to announce a \$500,000 donation to the Children First Fund: The Chicago Public Schools Foundation (CFF) from the company's Seeds of Change™ organic food brand. The grant will support the Eat What You Grow (EWYG) program at 130 CPS schools across Chicago, including the cultivation of learning gardens, farm-to-table education and professional development, farmers markets at two schools and 30 summer gardening jobs for high school students.

Learn more [HERE](#).

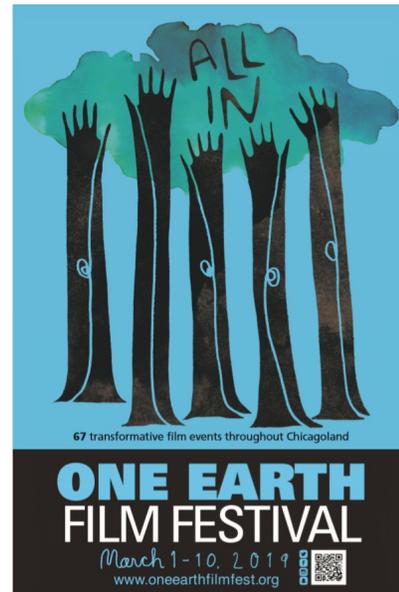
OPPORTUNITIES

One Earth Film Festival

The One Earth Film Festival is returning for its 8th year this March! One Earth Film Festival is the Midwest's premier environmental film festival, creating opportunities for understanding climate change, sustainability and the power of human involvement. The fest showcases top-issue, thought-provoking environmental films and leads audiences in interactive post-film discussions focused on solutions.

The theme of this year's fest is "All in" because "given the stakes, it's time to go all in for the planet." The schedule includes 28 environmental films covering climate change, conservation, food waste, energy, and more.

Screenings will take place **March 1-10** at more than 60 locations throughout Chicago and the surrounding counties. For the full schedule click [HERE](#).



Green Apple Day of Service

Green Apple Day of Service is a unique moment to join schools across the world to celebrate the central role that schools play in preparing the next generation of leaders in sustainability. A school's event is an opportunity to give students hands-on experience with sustainability, strengthening civic leadership, environmental literacy, and project management skills. Since it began in 2012, the Day of Service has inspired almost a million people in 80 countries to act in support of sustainability at their schools.

Join thousands around the globe for Green Apple Day of Service. Register your project [HERE](#). Projects register at the start of the school year and then can happen any time August 2018 through June 2019. Projects can only receive official support with funding, volunteers, and other resources if they are registered by March 15, 2019.

GREEN APPLE DAY OF SERVICE

Young Reporters for the Environment Competition



The National Wildlife Federation invites students between the ages of 11 to 19 to participate in their [National Young Reporters for the Environment](#) competition. Participants are asked to investigate an environmental issue and report on it using journalistic techniques in either writing, photography, or video. Entries should be relevant to the participants' local community, connect to a global perspective, include possible solutions, and be disseminated to an appropriate target audience.

Submissions may be authored by an individual student or a group of students working together (maximum of 4 students per group).

Submissions are due by **February 22, 2019**.

Green Schools Conference & Expo

Early bird pricing for the 2019 Green Schools Conference & Expo (GSCE) has been extended through **February 22!**

GSCE is a national event to bring together all the players involved in making green schools a reality: people who lead, operate, build, and teach in U.S. schools. Two days of programming offer inspiring keynote speakers, informative workshops and breakout sessions and the chance to network with colleagues from across the country. In 2019, GSCE will be hosted in partnership with IMPACT, a regional sustainability conference.

When: April 8 – 9, 2019

Where: St. Paul, Minnesota

Register [HERE](#).

SUPPORT ZERO WASTE SCHOOLS

Do you value the work of Seven Generations Ahead and our Zero Waste Schools Program? Your support will help us help more schools. Here are two easy ways to give:

- [Amazon Smile](#): Choose SGA as your charity of choice and Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase to support our programs.
- Give a monetary gift to SGA via our [donate page](#).



EVENTS



Oak Park Food Waste Workshop

February 12, 7 pm

Did you know 40% of our food supply is wasted? With over 40 million Americans going hungry, what can be done? Attend this food waste workshop to learn from professionals in our community who can help you make impactful changes to reduce food waste. Register [HERE](#).



The Naturally Beautiful Garden Conference

February 16, 12 – 5 pm

Learn practical strategies to get the garden of your dreams while saving the planet. Learn from visionary landscape architect Claudia West, author of *Planting in a Post-Wild World*, and award-winning garden designer Ben Vogt, author of *A New Garden Ethic: Cultivating Defiant Compassion for an Uncertain Future*. West and Vogt will lead a half-day conference on how to design stunning home landscapes that inspire human happiness, provide critical habitat for wildlife and fight climate change.



2019 Wild Things Conference

February 23, 9 am – 6pm

The conference, which takes place at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, will feature over 100 presentations, 60 exhibits, and a multitude of performances, poster sessions, and networking opportunities celebrating this region's nature and how people enjoy and protect it.

Register for the conference [HERE](#).



Big Green Spring Garden Workshop

Multiple dates

Join Big Green to learn how to organize your planting day, plant with students, and manage the care of your spring garden. We will cover the following garden skills: responding to changes in weather; supporting fast plant growth – soil and water; identifying sprouts/weeds; rolling/on-going harvesting; and tasting.

Tuesday, March 13: Beethoven (South)

Wednesday, March 20: Calmecca (Central)

Thursday, March 21: Von Linne (North)

Do you have feedback for Zero Waste Schools?

Contact us with feedback, recommendations, stories to include, and more at zerowaste@sevengenerationsahead.org

Seven Generations Ahead | 708.660.9909 | [Email](#) | [Website](#)

STAY CONNECTED



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