



MAY 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](#)

COMPOSTING & RECYCLING

Green Locker Clean-Out Guide



As the school year comes to a close, it is time to clear out paper, notebooks, school supplies, and other materials that have accumulated in students' lockers throughout the year. Much of this material gets thrown away and sent to landfill when it could be reused or recycled. By having a "green" locker

clean-out, your school can significantly reduce this waste. It involves providing bins for students to sort their unwanted locker contents into categories of Donate, Recycle, and Landfill.

A Green Locker Clean-Out teaches students and staff how to manage materials more sustainably. Reusing good school supplies can save teachers and families money, and recycling typically costs school districts less to haul than trash. This Green Locker Clean-Out Guide will take you through all the steps of planning and implementing, providing best practices and tips along the way.

Check out SGA's Green Locker Clean-Out Guide [HERE](#).

International Compost Awareness Week

[International Compost Awareness Week](#) (ICAW) is celebrated each year during the first full week of May. The goal is to raise awareness about the benefits of using compost to improve soils, grow healthy plants, reduce the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, improve water quality, and protect the environment.

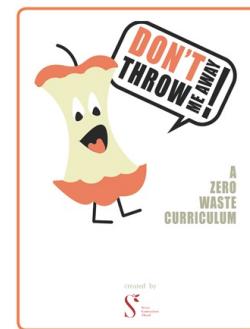


The program includes a poster contest focused on a different theme each year. This year's theme is *Compost! Building a Better Future*. An 11th grade artist, Talia Mitre, created this year's poster. Click [here](#) to learn more about this year's contest and past years. The ICAW poster contest starts in September, so check back then for information on entering the 2019 contest. You can purchase ICAW posters [here](#). They would be a beautiful way to decorate and educate in your composting lunchroom!

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Don't Throw Me Away: A Zero Waste Curriculum

Don't Throw Me Away! is a zero waste curriculum of [Seven Generations Ahead's Zero Waste Schools Program](#). Lessons address the challenges of waste, how it is handled in our communities, and solutions for recovering resources through a lens of sustainability. The curriculum helps students see that their choices as consumers have an impact on the world around them. Students learn different options for conserving and recovering resources such as reusing, recycling, and composting.



Click [HERE](#) to order your FREE electronic copy – no waste!

Learn about the importance of healthy soil



Laura Danly, an astronomer at Griffith Observatory in California, is helping the USDA promote its healthy soils campaign. Why is an astronomer talking about soil, rather than the sky? "Studying Earth is just like studying the planets. Earth is a planet, and it's the most amazing planet we know. It's the only one we know that has life on it, so it's natural for me to want to talk about Earth and share some important messages with people about how we can make Earth healthier," Danly says. Schools can support healthy soil through composting food scraps which returns nutrients to soil.

HEALTHY FOOD

Illinois Farm to School Network



The National Farm to School Network cites [research](#) showing that a farm to school program leads to a decrease in overall food waste. The [Illinois Farm to School Network](#), a program of Seven Generations Ahead, is a people-powered movement that seeks to strengthen the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers. The network is comprised of teachers, early care providers, food service staff, farmers, students, and others who are working to change food purchasing and education practices in their communities. The network provides training, connects partners, and shares resources about all aspects of farm to school -- including local food sourcing, hands-on nutrition education, and school gardening.

Click [HERE](#) to join the network. Membership is free!

SCHOOL GARDENS

University of Illinois Extension resources

[University of Illinois Extension](#) is the flagship outreach effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents of all Illinois' 102 counties — and beyond.



U of I Extension offers educational programs in five broad areas:

- Energy and environmental stewardship
- Food safety and security
- Economic development and workforce preparedness
- Family health, financial security, and wellness
- Youth development

[Search by county](#) to learn more about the programs offered at your local extension office. Their websites are filled with great resources covering topics like STEM, school gardens, and local food. They offer teacher workshops and classroom visits facilitated by Master Gardeners. They also have [Composting Central](#), a clearinghouse for resources about composting.

Hatch Patch Gives and Grows

We're so proud to see how the [Hatch Patch](#) school garden at Hatch Elementary School in Oak Park District 97 has grown. SGA was an early booster of the Hatch Patch and the concept of school gardens. Every year the garden grows better and continues a key role in the school's zero waste program. Students compost lunchroom food waste, compost is used to enrich the garden soil, and extra garden produce is donated to a local food pantry.



The Green Team partnered with the Hatch Patch to create this short film titled *Hatch Grows and Gives* that was entered in the [One Earth Film Festival](#). The film shows how the Hatch Patch teaches students about gardening and also donates fresh produce to the local food pantry. The film earned special recognition and was screened at an event during the film festival.

FOOD RECOVERY

K-12 School Food Recovery Roadmap

The most recent edition of BioCycle featured the article [K-12 Wasted Food Reduction and Food Recovery Roadmap](#). In it, authors Nancy Deming and Janet Whited detail their journey to implement food reduction and recovery programs at their K-12 school districts in California. The roadmap focuses on best practices for reducing and recovering school meal leftovers, including the use of share tables and donation programs. The article includes an extensive list of resources. Check it out!

Senate approves initiative to reduce food waste

In the effort to reduce food waste and help the less fortunate in Illinois, the State Senate approved legislation

sponsored by State Sen. John Curran (R-Downers Grove) that allows for state government agencies to donate leftover food to local nonprofits and donation collections.



"It's a concern to see so much food wasted as a result of the current policy," said Curran. "This change to our procurement code is environmentally friendly and helps prevent Illinois from adding unnecessary waste to the already-overflowing landfills. The extra food will also make a very large difference to our local collections and homeless or lower income populations."

Read more [HERE](#)

EPA Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits



This [guide](#) is intended to help educate students about the amount of food they waste in their school cafeterias and to encourage them to reduce waste and eat more of the nutritious foods provided through USDA's school meals programs or brought from home.

In 2015, the [USDA](#) and the [US EPA](#) announced the first ever national goal to reduce food waste by 50 percent by 2030. A school waste audit is a great way to understand and plan waste reduction strategies.

OPPORTUNITIES

Captain Planet Foundation Grant Opportunities

[Captain Planet Foundation](#) invests in programs that embrace STEM learning and empower youth to become local and global environmental change-makers. Educators, both K-12 classroom and informal, who are interested in receiving support for students to design and implement hands-on environmental solutions are eligible for project funding. Check out the [grants and resource opportunities](#) on their website.

EVENTS



Bike to School Day

May 9

Strap on your helmets, raise your kickstands, and join the thousands of students, families, community partners, and elected officials all around the country who will be participating in this year's Bike to School Day.



Friends of the Chicago River



Midwest Grows Green

May 11 – 18

Midwest Pesticide Action Center will bring an entire week of natural lawn care events with their local partners.

Chicago River Day 2018

May 12, 9 am – 1 pm

Join us to remove tons of debris, restore miles of river-side trails, plant beautiful native plants, and much more. Spanning the river's 156-mile system with over 60 locations to choose from, there are many ways for people of all ages to get involved.

Go Green IL Schools Spring Meeting

May 18, 11 am – 12:30 pm

Join us at the New Trier Winnetka Campus where we will tour the new 'West Wing' and learn about the many ways the school is incorporating sustainability into its buildings and operations.

Midwest Water Reclamation Plant Tours

May 19, 9 am – 12 pm

Six MWRD water reclamation plants will offer FREE tours held in conjunction with National Infrastructure Week. The public will have the opportunity to visit one of the plants without advanced reservations or background checks to learn how we are recovering resources and transforming water.

Reducing Wasted Food through Campus Composting and Food Recovery Webinar

May 22, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm

This webinar will include food recovery and donation, front and back of house composting, commercial and on-site composting, and information related to bins and signage.

Click [here](#) to learn more and view last month's webinar.

Summer Garden Workshops (FREE)

May 22–24, 4:30 – 6:30 pm

Wrap up the school year with a harvest celebration, then plant a summer garden with the goal of growing heat-loving summer crops or low-maintenance cover crops—whichever suits your school's summer plans.



Do you have feedback for Zero Waste Schools?

Contact us with feedback, recommendations, stories to include, and more at

zerowaste@sevengenerationsahead.org

STAY CONNECTED



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