



APRIL 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](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

Take Action this Earth Day!



Earth Day is Monday, April 22. Looking for ways to help your school take meaningful action? Here are some ideas:

- Plant a native garden: Restoring native plant habitat is vital to preserving biodiversity. Many organizations throughout Illinois host native plant sales in the spring months. Check [HERE](#) for a plant sale near you.
- Start on-site composting to divert fruit and vegetables scraps from the landfill and create an engaging learning opportunity for students.
- Participate in a neighborhood cleanup in your neighborhood. The Earth Day Network has a [Volunteer Clean Up Toolkit](#) to help you get started.

- Encourage the school community to make [pledges](#) to take actions to protect the earth.
 - Earth Day Network's theme for 2019 is [Protect Our Species](#). Take time to educate and raise awareness about the accelerating extinction rate of millions of species and the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.
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Youth Climate Strike



Thousands of students across the globe marched on March 15 as part of the Youth Climate Strike in an effort to force political leaders to pay attention to climate change. The US Youth Climate Strike's platform calls for legislative action to combat climate change, including the Green New Deal. The movement also asserts that the climate crisis should be declared a national emergency.

See pictures and read more about the strikes at these links:

- [Chicago Students Join International Youth Climate Strike](#) – WBEZ Chicago
 - [Pictures From Youth Climate Strikes Around the World](#) – NY Times
 - [Photos: Youth Climate Change Demonstrations Across The World](#) – NPR
 - [IL Climate Strike](#) – Twitter Page
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It's Our Future



"The global battle against climate change received a local boost on Wednesday, March 13th when philanthropic entrepreneurs awarded a \$50,000 grant to 'It's Our Future.'"

Pitched by Abby Banks, a student at Oak Park River Forest High School, and Gary Cuneen, Executive Director of Seven Generations Ahead, the award will be used for activities including "a media workshop series, film screenings, youth-led café forums, and field trips that connect youth to the global movement fighting climate change and its devastating effects."

Read the full article from the *Chicago Tribune* [HERE](#).

Young Filmmakers Contest Winners 2019

The One Earth Young Filmmakers Contest announced its 2019 winners! Their films premiered at the One Earth Film Festival on March 2, at the Gene Siskel Film Center, in Chicago.

The Contest received a record number 157 submissions from all over the country. First place winners and honorable mentions were selected for each of the following age levels: elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. Films were judged on their ability to address a problem and propose a solution to that problem on one or more of the following topics: Water, Waste, Food, Transportation, Energy, Open Space and Ecosystems.

View the winning films [HERE](#).

Kindergarten Zero Waste Orientation Guide

Kindergarten & New Student Orientation is a great time to introduce your school's newest students and their parents to your zero waste and sustainability efforts. Starting at a new school can be both exciting and intimidating, and many students may not have previous experience recycling or composting. Help new students feel comfortable and part of the school community by incorporating some of the ideas in this guide.



Click [HERE](#) for SGA's Kindergarten & New Student Zero Waste Orientation Guide.

Spring 2019 Issue of Green Schools Catalyst

The Spring 2019 Green Schools Catalyst Quarterly focuses on *Cracking the Cover: Schools as Text*. In this issue you can see how schools and districts across the country are turning classrooms inside out to expose students to real-world challenges without having to leave the school campus.

Read more [HERE](#).

COMPOSTING & RECYCLING

Lincoln School brings milk carton recycling back to D97 with zero waste relaunch

Keeping a zero waste program going requires coordination and support that can be challenging for schools, especially when there isn't more than one champion. Lincoln Elementary School in Oak Park District 97 started commercial composting and recycling in the lunchroom in the 2008-09 school year, but for various

reasons, the program didn't stick.

After years of hoping to get it back on track and seeing it work successfully at other schools, Lincoln parent Carolyn Cullen convinced the school administration to give it another try. This time around, the zero waste program was launched with broad support- the administration, the custodian, and multiple parent volunteers- all were on board and eager to see Lincoln succeed.

With guidance from Seven Generations Ahead's (SGA) [Zero Waste Schools Program](#), Lincoln relaunched its zero waste lunchroom program on January 29, 2019. That morning, all of Lincoln's 687 students and their teachers attended an assembly presentation delivered by SGA to learn about the How and Why of going zero waste. Together with parent volunteers, SGA provided onsite support during the launch day and conducted a waste audit to measure the school's impact. Lincoln students are doing a wonderful job of sorting and, thanks to Cullen's persistence, Lincoln now has a Green Team with a dedicated group of parent volunteers who help monitor the sorting stations.

Before



After



Read more [HERE](#).

Green Locker Clean-Out



The end of the school year is coming up soon and with it the opportunity for a great end-of-year project: a Green Locker Clean-Out. With a just a little advanced planning, your school can keep mountains of materials out of landfills. SGA created a Green Locker Clean-Out Guide to help.

A Green Locker Clean-Out involves providing bins for students to sort their unwanted locker or desk contents into categories of Donate, Recycle, and Landfill. Donated items can be made available to other students and staff in the school or can be donated (the [Chicago Creative Reuse Exchange](#) has a new opportunity to donate items). A Green Locker Clean-out can be a great student-led project, as well.

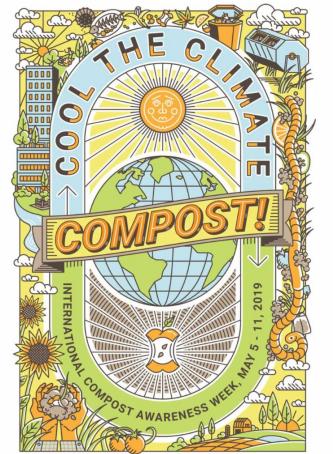
SGA's Green Locker Clean-Out Guide will take you through all steps of planning and implementation, providing best practices and tips along the way. Download the guide [HERE](#).

International Compost Awareness Week

May 5–11 is [International Compost Awareness Week](#) (ICAW). ICAW is the largest and most comprehensive education initiative of the compost industry. The theme for this year is Cool the Climate – Compost!

Throughout the week of ICAW, community and business events are held to encourage and celebrate composting. All types of composting – from backyard to large-scale are promoted. [Events](#) include tours of compost facilities, school gardening programs, compost workshops, lectures by a well-known gardening expert, and compost give-away days, to name just a few.

The [2019 ICAW poster](#) (and posters from previous years) are available for purchase. Wouldn't an ICAW poster be a nice way to decorate your school cafeteria and educate about composting?



The Composting Council Research & Education Foundation would like to thank the following sponsors for their support:



FOOD WASTE REDUCTION



Use Earth Month to look at food in a new way. Understanding the amount of food schools consume and waste is eye-opening and can help make informed decisions when implementing strategies to reduce at the source. Here are a few things to try at your school:

- [Plate Waste Audit](#) – Conduct a waste audit to understand how much food is being wasted and which foods are wasted most. This can help inform planning strategies to reduce waste.
- [Taste Test](#) – Check out this new resource from the Illinois Farm to School Network. Encourage kids to try new healthy foods and provide feedback on what they like and do not like. Schools can use this information when planning menus and making food purchasing decisions.
- [Offer vs. Serve](#) – Implement Offer versus Serve to allow children to decline certain food items offered by the school. This prevents students from being required to take food they do not want and good food from going in the trash.
- Have fun – Make school lunches fun by renaming items, marketing their benefits, and displaying them in a more appealing way. According to a study by the [Smarter Lunchrooms Movement](#), schools that renamed their carrots to "X-ray vision carrots" doubled student consumption.

WASTE PREVENTION

Pritzker calls for a state-wide bag tax

Americans throw away 100 billion plastic bags annually. That's about 307 bags per person! Illinois' Governor J.B. Pritzker is calling for a new state-wide bag tax in the hopes of decreasing the number of plastic bags that are used and sent to landfills. Pritzker's team also estimates a bag tax could generate between \$19 and \$23 million annually for the state.

Read more about the proposed bag tax [HERE](#).



SCHOOL GARDENS

Start a School Garden



Spring has sprung, and there's no better way to get students outside for some hands on learning than a school garden. Although April can still be a cool month here in the Midwest, there are still many crops that thrive during colder weather. These crops will grow best when sown prior to the last spring frost. Some of these crops are onion, spinach, asparagus, and lettuce.

For a robust list of items you can begin planting in April, check out [Mother Earth News' Guide](#).

However, it is crucial to understand what plants should be planted after the last frost. Cold weather can kill a wide variety of seedlings, therefore, if you are planting warm season crops ensure the last frost has passed prior to sowing. Here is a list of [Illinois](#) and [Wisconsin](#) areas with their average last frost date to guide your garden.

For more tips on how to start a school garden, click [HERE](#).

Bring Back the Monarchs!

Are you making spring plans for your school or community garden? Don't forget to plant for pollinators like the monarch butterfly. Adding milkweed alongside your food crops will attract pollinators and add new learning opportunities to your space. Check out the [Monarch Watch](#) for their offer of free milkweed plants for schools and nonprofits.

Monarchs and pollinators need our help due to habitat loss. If your school or nonprofit educational organization is interested in this conservation measure, the Monarch Watch can help you create a habitat for monarchs and pollinators.



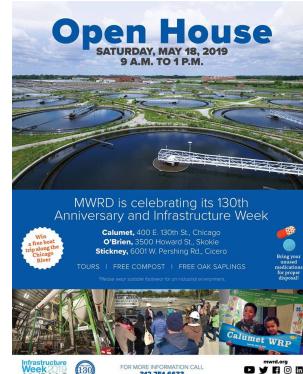
OPPORTUNITIES

MWRD Infrastructure Week

The [Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago](#) (MWRD) is celebrating its 130th Anniversary and Infrastructure week with tours, free compost, and free saplings.

Tours: May 18, 9 am – 1 pm.

- Calumet, 400 E. 130th St., Chicago
- O'Brien, 3500 Howard St., Skokie
- Stickney, 6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero



Free saplings: The Restore the Canopy, Plant a Tree program is distributing free Bur, Pine, Red and Swamp White Oak saplings to Cook County residents, schools, community groups, organizations and businesses. Visit one of the water reclamation plants listed below every Wednesday from 9 am – 12 pm beginning in April:

- Calumet WRP (400 E. 130th St., Chicago)
- Egan WRP (550 S. Meacham Rd., Schaumburg)
- Hanover Park WRP (1220 Sycamore Ave., Hanover Park)
- Kirie WRP (701 Oakton St., Des Plaines)
- O'Brien WRP (3500 Howard St., Skokie)
- Stickney WRP (6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero)

Free compost: Beginning in April, Cook County residents can also pick up free 20 lb. bags (limit 2) of EQ Compost at the above locations every Wednesday as well from 9 a.m. – noon.

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

Earth Day Events

- [Sierra Club Earth Day Festival](#): Alton, April 13.
- [Party for the Planet at Brookfield Zoo](#): Brookfield, April 14.
- [Composting Demo at Garfield Park Conservatory](#): Chicago, April 20



- [Major Taylor Trail Park Earth Day Clean-Up](#): Chicago, April 20.
- [Oak Park Earth Fest](#): Oak Park, April 27
- [Earth Day Celebration at Erickson Woods](#): Winnetka, April 28
- [SCARCE's Earth Day Fair](#): Glen Ellyn, April 28
- [Chicago Park District Earth Day Celebrations Event List](#): Chicago, multiple dates



Beekeeping 101 for Teachers

April 6 & July 13

Learn about beekeeping from CPS teacher and beekeeper Art Helbig. This 3+ part workshop series will cover all the bases of starting and maintaining a hive in a school. Bees are essential, fascinating creatures that can inform everything from science to art, social studies, nutrition, gardening, and creativity!



Friends of the Chicago River



Chicago River Day 2019

May 11, 9 am – 12 pm

This beloved annual volunteer day has an immediate impact and collectively brings about long-term improvements in the health of the Chicago River. Help remove unsightly and harmful litter, restore miles of river-side trails, plant beautiful native plants, and more at one of over 60 locations along the 156-mile river system. Registration helps with planning, but is not required.

Growin' Green Garden Market

May 11, 9 am – 1 pm

Join SCARCE for their annual kick-off to the growing season! Shop the Garden Market for local and sustainable garden goods. Some of the things you can find at the Garden Market: food scrap amended compost, sustainably grown seedlings, Northeastern Illinois native plants, rain barrels, local honey, and informational workshops.

Northern Illinois Farm to School Bootcamp

May 17, 8:30 am – 2:30 pm

Join the Illinois Farm to School Network for a half day of



NORTHERN ILLINOIS FARM TO SCHOOL BOOT CAMP



learning, hands-on practice and collaboration in a professional demonstration kitchen and learning space. Teams of food service, administration and garden managers are encouraged to register! ISBE Continuing Education Credits are available for food service staff.

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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