

Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools



The *Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools* provides all schools—no matter their size or location—the tools to tackle the issue of wasted food.

What's the problem with food waste?

Roughly 7 billion school meals are served each year in the United States, and much of the waste from these meals is ending up in landfills, consuming valuable resources and contributing to climate change.

While single-use tableware and packaging comprise a lot of the waste in lunchrooms, food is often the largest component.

When food is landfilled, the nutrients contained in the food are lost, along with all the energy, water, and labor that went into its production, transportation, and preparation.

What are the solutions?

A great deal of lunchroom waste can be prevented or diverted from landfills through source reduction, food recovery, recycling, and composting, all of which provide many educational opportunities for students.

The Toolkit provides schools with useful information and resources for implementing many of the strategies on the Environmental Protection Agency's Food Recovery Hierarchy. A variety of solutions are shared—from

easy and quick to implement, to longer term and more resource intensive. Students, teachers, food service staff, lunchroom staff, parents, and administrators can all play a role in reducing school food waste.





The Toolkit's easy-to-use format allows you to jump in to find the strategies that work for your school. Each section includes case studies that highlight inspirational efforts to reduce food waste in schools across Illinois and provide guidance on how to:

✓ **Measure food waste**

- Waste audit guides
- How to determine what to audit in your lunchroom and kitchen
- Food waste tracking in kitchens
- Analyzing waste audit data

✓ **Prevent food waste**

- Sourcing food from school gardens and local farms to encourage consumption of healthy foods
- Menu planning and food preparation
- Preventing food waste at the serving line, including Offer versus Serve

✓ **Recover and redistribute surplus food**

- Policies and laws regarding share tables and the redistribution of food (including the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act that supports the donation of recovered food)
- How to set up and operate a share table

- Redistribution of surplus food within a school
- Donation of surplus food to an outside organization or in-school food pantry

✓ **Compost food scraps**

- The environmental benefits of composting
- Onsite composting
- Offsite commercial composting
- How to get started composting in your lunchroom

✓ **Educate and engage the school community**

- Hands-on classroom or service learning projects
- Curricula and lessons about food and food waste
- Teaching tools and resources

✓ **Communicate and celebrate success**

- Communications within school community
- Communications with the wider community
- Get recognized with programs such as Green Ribbon Schools and the US Food Waste Challenge



Go to www.sevengenerationsahead.org/food-waste-reduction-toolkit/ to download the Toolkit.

The Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools is a project of the Wasted Food Action Alliance and Seven Generations Ahead.