



DECEMBER 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](#)

Celebrate without waste this holiday season



This holiday season, give the planet a gift by getting closer to zero waste. Check out these tips:

Planning your feast: Eliminate single-use items and opt to use real dishes when setting the table. Compost food scraps after your meals. Learn how [HERE](#). Discover ways to reduce food waste this holiday season [HERE](#).

Gift wrap: Use cloth napkins, scarves, or cloth bags. Try old maps, newspaper, or easy-to-decorate brown paper bags for some added character that can be easily recycled.

Gift ideas:

- Give a compost collection service subscription. Find options at the [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#).
- Give a Zero Waste Eating Out Kit complete with a metal straw, reusable utensils, a cloth napkin, a reusable container for leftovers, an insulated coffee mug, a reusable water bottle, and a nice cloth bag to hold it all.
- Donate to a [local food bank](#) in honor of a loved one.

Recycle broken holiday lights: Find drop-off locations [HERE](#).

Holiday tree recycling:

- [Chicago's 2020 Tree Recycling Program](#) runs January 4-18. The mulch created is used to nourish plants and soil in parks and will also be made available to Chicago residents, free of charge, starting Jan. 7.
- Outside of Chicago? Check with your local public works department to see if they have a curbside pick up option for recycling trees.
- Several [compost subscription services](#) will collect your tree for a fee.

Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools

[The Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools](#) is a

comprehensive resource that provides all schools the tools to tackle the issue of wasted food. It identifies the main sources of wasted food and offers strategies for food waste prevention, recovery and redistribution, composting, education and engagement, and celebrating success.

While many of the strategies may not be possible to implement under current circumstances, now is a great time to start planning ahead. The Toolkit also contains many resources that schools can still use even in remote learning.

To learn more and download a PDF of the Toolkit, click [HERE](#).



The Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools is a project of the [Wasted Food Action Alliance](#) and was developed by SGA in collaboration with partners from the Wasted Food Action Alliance.

DIY Data + Action Litter Clean-Up

Tired of seeing litter in your neighborhood and in local parks? Take action with this new [activity](#) from Cafeteria Culture.



Collecting litter & litter data will:

- Allow you to share data and photos for lasting impact
- Help you engage policy makers on the plastic pollution problem
- Make community connections by engaging in a socially distanced activity together

This is a great class or family activity that merges science with social studies and gets students outdoors! Students can earn community service hours too!

Food Waste Warrior Toolkit

The World Wildlife Fund's updated [Food Waste Warrior Toolkit](#) contains lessons, activities, and resources that teach the planetary impact of what we eat and what we throw away. The curriculum is now divided by grade bands and includes a teacher guide, slideshow lessons, food waste audit instructions, discussion questions, and activities for home and schools that are designed to educate students about the issue of food waste and teach them how they can be part of the solution.



It's Our Future podcast: Recycling, Revisited

It's Our Future's **Jess Senger** takes a closer look at the 3 R's (reduce, reuse, recycle) in the podcast, "[Recycling, Revisited.](#)" Recycling is supposed to be a last resort and Jess reports "this is not the way most Americans think about their waste."

Take a listen to her interviews with **Carter O'Brien**, Sustainability Officer at the Field Museum, and **Susan**



IT'S OUR
FUTURE

Casey, Seven Generations Ahead's Zero Waste Schools Program Manager. This podcast aims to shed some light on the current issues with waste and landfills in our region.

Reopening with Reusables during COVID-19: A Transition to Green & Healthy K-12 Schools

Check out the [recording](#) of this informative and inspiring webinar hosted by the Center for Environmental Health (CEH).

Learn about the health and environmental risks associated with toxic chemicals commonly found in single-use foodware and hear from two school districts that are successfully piloting a transition from single-use foodware to healthier, more sustainable reusables. Presenters share what motivated them to make the transition to reusables, as well as the challenges presented and how they overcame them.



In early 2021, CEH plans to host a workshop for schools that want to take a deeper dive into how to make the transition to reusables. Contact foodware@ceh.org if interested in participating or if your school would like to share its expertise with reusables.

Apply to be a 2021 Green Ribbon School



The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Application](#) is open! Illinois Green Ribbon Schools recognizes PreK-12 schools that have active programs and actions to promote and educate students on sustainability. This year the evaluation process will take into account the changes and challenges this school year has presented. Applications can highlight pre-COVID sustainability efforts, as well as any current work being done to move these efforts forward. Top scoring schools from Illinois will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program for consideration at the national level.

View this [webinar](#) to learn more about the application/nomination process. Contact Illinois Green Alliance for assistance at info@illinoisgreenalliance.org or (312) 245-8300.

Application deadline: Feb. 8, 2021 at 5 p.m.

Social Justice Resources

The Green School National Network has compiled a [selection of social justice resources](#) to help teachers design and facilitate their sustainability units or lessons through a social justice lens. By teaching social justice education, students become aware of inequities in “everyday social, environmental, economic, and political situations” and learn to “recognize and interrupt inequitable patterns and practices in society.” Learn ways to make these connections explicit in your sustainability-related programming.



Nurdle Patrol



Nurdles are small pellets that are melted to make any type of plastic product like plastic containers, bags, and bottles. Through leaks, spills, and other storage or transportation errors, nurdles end up in our oceans, as well as the Great Lakes.

Read this article, [New Research on Nurdle Batches and Distribution](#), to learn how a California high school senior's work with the Nurdle Patrol to identify the types and quantities of nurdles on the Texas Gulf Coast that will help inform pollution policy in the state and across the country.

Learn more about the Nurdle Patrol and how you might get involved

[HERE](#).

Nature Conservancy Virtual Field Trips



Explore the world with the [Nature Conservancy's Virtual Field Trips](#). Designed for ages 9-15, but customizable for all ages, these videos allow students to travel the world and explore natural environments without leaving their home or classroom.

Each field trip contains a video, teacher guide, and student activities that have a special focus on making the connection between what students see on the screen and taking action in their own cities and towns.

Young Filmmakers Contest

[Young Filmmakers Contest 2021](#)

Youth in grades 3 through age 25 are invited to submit a short film that presents solutions to an environmental/sustainability related issue. Submissions are due **Jan. 5, 2021**. The winning films will premiere at the [One Earth Film Festival](#) in March 2021, and winners will receive cash prizes or scholarships. Take a look at winning films from 2020 [HERE](#).



Grant and scholarship opportunities

[School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants](#): Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win one of four grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$65,000 of equipment. Applications and photos must be submitted by a school nutrition director **Deadline Dec. 31, 2020**.

[COVID-19 Emergency School Meal Delivery Fund](#): GENYOUth is providing grants of up to **\$3,000 per school** to supply much-needed resources for meal distribution and delivery efforts to get food to students during COVID-19. From soft-sided coolers, bags and containers for individual servings, to protective gear for food service sanitation and safety, this equipment will help ensure our children continue to receive the nutritious meals they need. Applications will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis.

[USDA 1890 National Scholars Program](#): For high school students who want to study agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, and related disciplines at a 1890 Land-Grant University. Full tuition, room/board included. **Deadline Jan. 31, 2021**.

[President's Environmental Youth Award](#): Students can submit an award-winning project and make a difference. Applicants are eligible to compete for a regional certificate of special recognition and a national Presidential award. **Deadline Feb. 19, 2021**.

[Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators](#): For K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for teaching their students. Up to two teachers from each of EPA region, from different states, will be selected to receive this award. **Deadline Feb. 19, 2021**.

Illinois Conservation Foundation's Conservation Achievement Scholarship: Awarded to 4 outstanding high school seniors in Illinois who have demonstrated effective, voluntary and long-term dedication to the preservation, protection, enhancement and/or promotion of Illinois' natural resources. **Deadline March 1, 2021.**

Events



Illinois Green Schools Project

Registration deadline Dec. 14

Project-based challenge for K-12 schools to devise and implement creative no- to low-cost energy, water and waste initiatives, and sustainable practices for their schools.



Moving Beyond Plastics: Legislative Action

Dec. 16, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Join this webinar to learn from our lawmakers about regulations being crafted to address plastic pollution. Hear from US Senator Dick Durbin and staff about the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act and from Alderman Matt Martin about the City of Chicago's Plastic Free Waters Ordinance. Andrea Densham, Senior Director of Conservation Policy and Advocacy at the Shedd Aquarium, will be moderating.



EEIA Annual Conference Call for Presenters

Ongoing

Submit an application to present at the 2021 Environmental Education Association of Illinois' Virtual Conference, March 11-13 2021.

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



This newsletter was created by Seven Generations Ahead.
Funding for Zero Waste Schools is provided by Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas, and Food:Land:Opportunity, a collaboration between Kinship Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust and funded through the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.

PEOPLES GAS®
Community Fund



Food:Land:Opportunity
Localizing the Chicago Foodshed

NORTH SHORE GAS®
Community Fund