



SEPTEMBER 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.

Share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

CPS Commercial Composting & Recycling Program

SGA's Zero Waste Schools team has been busy helping Chicago Public Schools (CPS) restart its Commercial Composting & Recycling Program and is excited to work with CPS to expand the program to new schools this year.

During the *Back-to-School Composting & Recycling Webinar* last month, schools currently in the program, as well as any interested schools were provided an overview of the program that included an outline of zero waste team roles, standard operating procedures and best practices, and COVID adaptations.



ZWS is currently creating an educational video for students and a zero waste guide that will further support CPS schools on their path to zero waste. Read more about the CPS program and its impacts on SGA's [Zero Waste Schools website](#).

Pumpkin Smash 2021



The **Pumpkin Smash** is an annual effort by communities to divert pumpkins from landfills by providing locations for residents to drop-off jack-o-lanterns to be composted. Organized by SCARCE, the event is held each year the Saturday after Halloween.

It's a great community sustainability project for school environmental or service clubs and community groups.

The 2021 Pumpkin Smash will take place **Saturday, Nov. 6**. Since city approvals must be submitted to your county recycling coordinator at least 30 days in advance of the event, now is the time to start planning. Refer to SCARCE's [How to Host a Pumpkin Collection](#) guide for more information.

[Zero waste lunchrooms & climate change](#)

Zero waste lunchrooms allow students to reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost to take action on climate change each and every day.



Composting keeps food out of landfills, avoiding the greenhouse gas emissions created when food and other organic materials decompose in the absence of oxygen. Making products using recycled materials uses less energy and reduces the need to extract new raw materials, which reduces the use of fossil fuels.



Even with COVID restrictions, it is still possible to implement waste reduction measures:

- Set up sorting stations in the lunchroom or outdoors. If meals are served in classrooms, set up hallway or classroom sorting stations.
- Promote **zero waste lunches** from home and the use of reusable water bottles.
- Employ **Offer v. Serve** for milk even if students don't have a choice of meal items.
- Check out the **Zero Waste Schools Toolkit** for sorting signs, tips on how to set up a sorting station, and many other helpful recycling and waste reduction resources.

International Compost Awareness Week poster & video contests



Know any creative students who'd like to help spread the word about the benefits of composting? Encourage them to enter this year's International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) poster and video contests!

The contests are open now through Nov. 1, 2021.

All entries should highlight the theme of ICAW 2022: *Recipe for Regeneration: Compost*. ICAW is May 1-7, 2022.

Poster contest: Anyone in 9th grade (age 14) or older may enter. The winning poster will be reproduced and distributed to thousands nationwide to promote ICAW and will be featured on the Compost Research & Education Foundation website and the US Composting Council website. The winner will receive a \$500 prize.

Video contest: Anyone in grades 4–8 or ages 10–13 may enter. Videos must be 30 seconds or less. All video entries will be shown on the ICAW YouTube channel. The winning video will be highlighted on the ICAW website. The winner will receive a tablet.

Learn more [HERE](#).

It's time to register for the Great Apple Crunch!

The Illinois Great Apple Crunch is an annual celebration of fresh, local apples on the second Thursday of October, during National Farm to School Month and is part of the Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch. **This year's Crunch will take place on Thursday, October 14.**



In total, over 588,000 Illinois participants- and over 1.3 million people across the region- took part in local Crunch events in 2019. All K-12 schools, early childhood sites, boarding facilities, groups at home and on local farms, community programs, along with businesses and organizations across Illinois, can join us to celebrate the 2021 Crunch.

Click [HERE](#) and join us in the celebration!

SWANCC grants & presentations for schools

Waste Reduction Grants

PreK-12th grade public or private schools in SWANCC-member communities are eligible. Grant funds may be used to start or expand programs and projects focused on preventing waste – reusing items and recycling materials or composting food waste on-site or through a commercial service provider.

Application deadline: Oct. 22. Learn more and apply [HERE](#).



Education presentations

Schools in SWANCC-member communities can request in-person, virtual, or recorded presentations of the [Taking Care of Our Earth](#) presentation for ages 4-8. This interactive, educational, and entertaining 30-minute presentation addresses the environmental R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, is correlated to NGSS, and addresses grade level standards. There is no cost for the program.

CDC supports the use of reusable foodware



During the pandemic, schools have turned to single-use foodware for their cafeterias under the assumption that these disposable items are safer. [Public health professionals](#) have found that since COVID-19 primarily spreads from inhaling aerosolized droplets, rather than through contact with surfaces, reusables are safe and even likely safer than single-use products.

The following statement from the [CDC Guidelines for Food Service and School Meals](#) supports these findings and the use of reusable food ware in school cafeterias: "*Given the very low risk of transmission from surfaces and shared objects, there is no need to limit food service approaches to single use items and packaged meals.*"

One Earth Young Filmmakers Contest

[One Earth Film Festival](#) seeks short, 3- to 8-minute environmental films from youth in third grade through age 25. Animated films of 45-seconds minimum are also accepted. Rules are more relaxed for those in grade 12 and up, and prizes have expanded. There are four \$1,000 top prizes for live action, animation, creativity, and post grad categories.

Deadline for submission is Jan. 5, 2022.



Grants and other opportunities

[Illinois Green Schools Project](#): This project-based challenge organized by the Illinois Green Alliance supports K-12 schools in devising and implementing creative no- to low-cost energy, water and waste initiatives, and sustainable practices in schools. This year's optional theme will focus on energy and environmental justice. Contact [Liz Wimmer](#) with questions or for more information. **Registration ends Sept. 17.**

[Big Green Jumpstart](#): \$2,000 flash grants to accelerate outdoor learning for educators who have a garden and want to do more with it, are already teaching in the garden and need funds to engage more students in outdoor learning. Questions email: jumpstart@biggreen.org. **Required webinar: Sept. 15, 4-5 pm CST, or 6:30-7:30 pm**

CST. Application deadline: Sept. 21.

CHS Foundation Classroom Grant: CHS Foundation provides \$500 grants each year to PreK-12 teachers who have classroom projects that use agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and more. **Application deadline: Sept.15.**

Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom offers two grants:

- Teacher Project Grants provide up to \$300 to PreK-12th grade teachers for projects that promote agricultural literacy in the classroom. **Application deadline is Oct. 15.**
- Teacher Book Grants provide up to \$250 in books from a pre-selected list of titles to help teachers integrate agriculture into a variety of curriculum areas. **Application deadline: Oct. 15.**

Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant: Applicants must use native Illinois plants in their wildlife habitat area and be prepared to maintain and commit resources to the project for at least five years. Projects need to be implemented on school grounds or another public place. **Preliminary application deadline: Oct. 31. Deadline: Nov. 30.**

Events

USDA Roundtable on Food Waste Solutions in the U.S. and Abroad

Sept. 15, 10 am–11:30 pm CST

Attend this virtual roundtable to learn about innovative policies and approaches to reducing food waste in the US, Europe, and the UK. Food waste leaders from five cities and states will share about their successful efforts to combat food waste.

CCRx Repair Fair

Sept. 18, 11 am-2 pm; 2124 W 82nd Pl, Chicago

Bring something broken (electronics, clothing, jewelry, toys, etc.) and Chicago Tool Library fixers will try to fix it! No computers or printers. First come, first served. Hard stop at 2pm, pick-up ends at 3pm. FREE

September Adopt-a-Beach

Sept. 18

Join thousands of volunteers for September Adopt-a-Beach as they work together to clean up the Great Lakes beaches and shorelines. Participate in a clean up near you, or plan one of your own.

International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

Sept. 29

Recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the day is a call to action for both the public and private sectors to prioritize actions and innovations to reduce food loss and waste.

Leftover Lunch: How Saving Food Saves the Planet

Sept. 30, 12 pm CST

Join World Wildlife Fund for this virtual program that will teach students responsible food habits that they can put into practice every day. Kids will learn the connection between their relationship with food and the health of our planet. Ideal for grades 4-8.

Earth Force Educator Training

Oct. 5, 4-6:30 pm and Oct. 7, 4-6:30 pm

During these virtual workshops, educators will become fully trained in the Earth Force project-based, environmental education, and civic action focused curriculum.

Walk to School Day

Oct. 6

Register to participate as a school, a neighborhood, or a family in order to encourage physical activity, reduce reliance on cars, and promote safe neighborhoods. Participation is encouraged throughout the month of October.

NAAEE's virtual 2021 Annual Conference and Research Symposium

Conference, Oct. 12-15; Research symposium, Oct. 7-8

The North American Association for Environmental Education conference will reflect on the power of

environmental education to bring people of all backgrounds and disciplines together to solve our most pressing problems and to create more just and sustainable communities.

Seven Generations Ahead | [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.

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