



NOVEMBER 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](#)

Getting back on track with zero waste

Determined to overcome pandemic challenges and interruptions, schools in SGA's [Zero Waste Schools-Lake County Program](#) have made it a priority to get their zero waste lunchrooms back up and running. The Zero Waste Schools team at SGA created a 15-minute education video to teach/re-teach students the How & Why of going for zero waste to help get them started.



Read the full story [HERE](#) about how Red Oak, Oak Terrace, and Braeside Elementary Schools in North Shore School District 112 in Highland Park have made it happen.

It's Our Future speaks out at COP26



This year's UN Climate Summit (COP26) in Glasgow arrived with much anticipation and urgency. In the wake of the latest IPCC report, which was [described by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as a "code red" for humanity](#), many have argued that this is the most consequential global climate conference of our lifetimes.

It is against this backdrop that five students from SGA's youth environmental advocacy program, [It's Our Future](#), traveled to Glasgow for the event. Students from Oak Park River Forest High School, Evanston Township High School, and Chicago Public Schools, attended the first week of COP26 to observe negotiations, connect with other activists, and speak to leaders from around the world.

On November 4, the students did a livestream from Glasgow, hosted by [One Earth Film Festival](#) in partnership with SGA. They shared their own experiences, as well as videos

and a live interview with leaders and other young activists from around the world. View the [livestream recording](#). If you're looking for more COP26 content, check out SGA's website for [daily dispatches](#) from Gary Cuneen, SGA executive director, and the IOF youth.

Super fun sorting videos

Trying to get a sorting routine up and running or re-energized in your lunchroom? Check out these fun videos:



- [Sort Like Crazy](#) by Mr. Eco, ft Jenny Tormey
- [SORT!](#) by Zero Waste USA



Give thanks, and create zero waste



Instead of filling up the landfill this Thanksgiving, show your gratitude through a zero waste feast.

Setting the table

Use reusable dishes and avoid single-use items like paper/plastic plates, utensils, cups, and napkins.

Decorations

Natural items like gourds, seed pods, and colorful fall leaves make beautiful decorations. Use found items from your backyard or purchase from local farms at the farmers market. You can also get crafty with household items or thrift store finds to create your own decorations.

Cook from scratch using local ingredients

Cooking from scratch generally involves less plastic packaging. Opt for glass or paper packaging over plastic, when possible. Local produce tends to come with less packaging and also travels fewer miles to get to your plate.

Reusable containers

Thanksgiving is known for the plentiful amount of leftovers--for many people this is the best part! Provide guests reusable containers instead of disposables for those delicious leftovers.

Composting

Return nutrients to the soil by composting your Thanksgiving food scraps. Learn how to backyard compost or vermicompost from the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#). Many [communities](#) across Illinois offer curbside composting service. If this is not available in your community, a subscription-based compost bucket exchange service might be an option for you. Learn more at the [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#).

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle/Compost, and see how close to zero waste you can get this Thanksgiving!

Photo by Priscilla Du Preez for Unsplash

We Compost recognition program

We Compost is a recognition program of the [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#) that can promote your school's compost

program across a broad network and inspire other schools. If your school is composting food scraps (either commercially or onsite), get recognized and enjoy these perks:



- Trademark We Compost window decal
- Digital We Compost icon for your website
- Your logo and weblink on the We Compost partner category page
- Location pin on We Compost Google map
- Welcome on Instagram and Facebook
- Outreach access to meeting and event planners
- Community newsletter

Getting recognition is easy. Just click the *Tell us Here!* button on the [IFSC website](#) which will allow you to recommend a school for recognition, and the We Compost Recognition Program Committee will take it from there.

Click [HERE](#) to see a list of schools that have already joined the We Compost community.

Lead a household food waste challenge



Calling all teachers! Are you interested in leading a seriously fun COVID-safe project-based learning opportunity that students and their households can do together; one that will save them money, encourage healthy eating habits, and contribute to the #1 solution to global climate change?

If so, then [register](#) to learn to lead your class as a team in the 4-week **“Make the Most of Food Challenge”**! Join like-minded teachers in a team training course in February 2022 and/or go ahead and pre-register to lead a team in the annual April (Earth Month) 2022 challenge.

Teachers can receive certificate(s) for up to (12) professional learning units for participating and/or leading a team.

For a limited time only, request sponsorship for the \$150 registration fee by using the coupon code “WAITLIST2022”. Learn more [HERE](#).

This challenge is organized by [Recycle Leaders](#) in partnership with the [Audubon Naturalist Society](#).

Grants & resources from the Carton Council

Recycling milk cartons can save schools money on disposal costs, reduce landfill waste, and help students develop life-long recycling habits.

The [Carton Council](#) is offering recycling grants of **up to \$5,000** to help schools start or expand their milk carton recycling programs. Funds can be used for equipment, education, and implementation support services. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.



Contact your regional coordinator to request an application:

- Barbara Heineken (IL, MI, OH, IN, eastern U.S.): bheineken@recycle.com
- Debra Dodson (MN, WI, western U.S.): ddodson1@mac.com
- Michele Wagner (Rocky Mountain region, central southern U.S.):

These resources from the Carton Council help make milk carton recycling easy:

[School Program Start Up Guide](#)

[Schools Best Practices Guide](#)

Check with your recycling hauler to make sure they accept milk cartons before starting a carton recycling program.

Illinois Green Ribbon Schools



The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools application](#) is now open! The program recognizes schools that have active programs, actions, and dedication to promote and educate about sustainability. Working in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Green Alliance accepts applications from schools across Illinois. Showcase your

school's achievements and let your community know what steps you've taken to green your school!

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.

Contact Liz Wimmer with questions: lwimmer@illinoisgreenalliance.org.

Application deadline: Jan. 10, 2022

"Sustainable Schools Begin and End with Equity"

The latest edition of the Green School National Network's [Green Schools Catalyst Quarterly](#) takes a look at the many ways in which K-12 schools are creating coursework, classrooms, and environments where racism is openly discussed, equity is integrated into the school culture, and inclusivity is a requirement, not an elective. Contributors share their perspectives on social justice and the environment and address the need to center the voices and experiences of the BIPOC community in K-12 schools for true, long-lasting sustainability to be achieved.



The publication also includes four inspiring case studies about K-12 school districts that are focusing on equity, inclusion, and social justice in their curriculum, operations, and school culture. [Read](#) on to learn more about this important work.

Sixth IPCC Report presents a teachable moment for K-12 schools

"The vast majority of education leaders do not have a clear understanding that they need to be involved in the climate leadership landscape. Despite these challenges, the K-12 education sector has a great opportunity to play a role in the most important teachable moment humanity has ever experienced: surviving and thriving in the climate era."

[Read](#) more from this recent blogpost from the Green Schools National Network to learn how the Sixth Assessment Report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) can spark action for the entire K-12 education sector and what this could look like at your school.

Grants and other opportunities

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. **Application deadline: Nov. 30.**

EPA Environmental Education Local Grants: For projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques that will serve to increase environmental and conservation literacy and encourage behavior that will benefit the environment in local communities. Three to four grants in each of EPA's 10 regions will be awarded, \$50,000 up to \$100,000 each. **Application deadline: Dec. 6.**

Whole Kids Foundation Salad Bar Grant: Any district or independent school participating in the National School Lunch Program can apply. The Salad Bars to Schools grant program donates salad bars to U.S. schools to give kids daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

One Earth Film Festival's Young Filmmakers Contest 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. There are four \$1,000 top prizes for live action, animation, creativity, and post grad categories. **Submission deadline: Jan. 5, 2022.**

Events

Go Green Illinois Meeting

Nov. 16, 1-3 pm

Join colleagues from 20+ suburbs for a program on regional and local climate action. Edith Makra of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus will discuss the Regional Climate Action Plan, one of the first regional plans in the U.S.

From Understanding to Action: "Plastic Wars" Documentary Discussion

Nov. 16, 6:30-8:30 pm

Watch the 1-hour joint investigation from Frontline and NPR, then join the conversation about how our national obsession with recycling has distracted attention from the more consequential environmental impacts of ever-growing consumption and learn how you can be part of the solution. A link to view the documentary will be included in your confirmation email.

EPA Tools & Resources Webinar: Food Waste Research

Nov. 17, 2 pm (cst)

This presentation will highlight the latest research on the environmental impacts of U.S. food waste and the potential benefits of meeting the EPA/USDA goal of halving food waste by 2030.

One Earth Film Festival Filmmaking Workshops

Dec. 5, 1-4:30 pm (Grades 6-8) and Dec. 12, 1-4:30 pm (Grades 3-5)

Students will learn the basics of how to make a film from a professional filmmaker. Instruction will cover story, framing, lighting, audio, editing, and production. **Cost is \$40 for River Forest residents and \$45 for non-residents.**

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



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