



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](#)

SGA's It's Our Future goes to COP27

Five Chicago area students and one teacher, who are all part of SGA's youth climate advocacy program, [It's Our Future](#) (IOF), are in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt for this year's UN Climate Summit, [COP27](#). Gary Cuneen, SGA's executive director, and Rachel Rosner, IOF program director, are accompanying the group.



It's Our Future
COP27 Delegates



This year's [student delegates](#) come from Oak Park River Forest High School, Solorio Academy in Chicago, and Evanston Township High School. An environmental science, chemistry, and biology teacher from Solorio Academy also join the group. The delegates are attending the first week of COP27, from November 6th through the 12th. Seven Generations Ahead has "observer" status again this year and is reporting back daily from the conference's Blue Zone.



It's not too late to join the coverage. Follow Seven Generations Ahead on [Facebook](#) and Instagram at [@sevengensahead](#), and follow It's Our Future on Instagram at [@iofyouth](#).

TOMORROW, Nov. 10 at noon cst: [From the Mideast to the Midwest](#)
Join IOF delegates to hear about developments on the ground at COP27 and the issues most important to them, from policy to justice to the latest science. They'll answer your questions and discuss how they're bringing the climate fight back home.

Save the evening of Dec. 6 for a virtual presentation: *Stories from COP.*

Show your gratitude with a zero waste feast

Instead of filling up the landfill this Thanksgiving, try some of these ideas for a zero waste celebration:

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, and Compost to see how close to zero waste you can get this Thanksgiving!

Photo by [Priscilla Du Preez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Green Schools Conference

Feb. 27 - Mar. 1, 2023, New Orleans, LA



**GREEN SCHOOLS
CONFERENCE**

The Green Schools Conference (GSC) is the only event to bring together all stakeholders involved in making green schools a reality: people who lead, operate, build, and teach in schools. Designed to educate, connect, and inspire, attendees of this three-day in person conference will explore interdisciplinary content during general sessions, while also having dedicated time with peers to work through specific challenges, share best practices, and generate momentum to further green school actions across the country.

The 2023 program will address environmental impact, health and wellbeing, sustainability literacy, equity, and whole school sustainability. Attendees will learn from each other and will have the opportunity to connect with other green school champions.

GSC is presented by the [Center for Green Schools](#) at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), in partnership with the [Green Schools National Network \(GSNN\)](#).

Early bird rates end Jan. 13, 2023. Register [HERE](#).

Trex launches Plastic Film Recycling Challenge for K-12 schools

The 16th annual [Trex Plastic Film Recycling Challenge](#) begins **November 15, 2022**, in conjunction with America Recycles Day. The annual competition challenges students to collect and recycle as much polyethylene (PE) plastic film as possible over a five-month period between America Recycles Day (Nov. 15) and Earth Day (April 22).

In addition to earning national recognition, top-performing schools can win high-performance Trex outdoor living products for their campuses, as well as cash prizes to use toward educational programming and supplies.

The Trex Plastic Film Recycling Challenge is easy to implement for schools of any grade level and size. Once enrolled, schools receive a turnkey kit complete with detailed instructions, promotional materials, recycling bins, and a list of [qualifying recyclable materials](#). Participants simply weigh and report collection totals to Trex each month throughout the collection period before delivering the recycled plastic to [designated Trex drop-off points](#) in their communities.



Register [HERE](#) to participate in the Challenge (scroll down to view the registration form). For more information, contact NexTrex@trex.com.

Changing Behavior to Help More People Waste Less Food



[Champions 12.3](#) just released a new [guide](#) to reduce food waste through behavior change. The guide helps key actors, policy makers, food businesses, non-food businesses, non-profits, and educators/other influencers in the food system focus on how they can help consumers reduce food waste by altering their behavior.

Changing Behavior to Help More People Waste Less Food encourages partnerships and evidence-based approaches to address food waste by raising awareness and addressing the barriers to food waste reduction strategies.

'Children can't advocate for themselves': American public schools have a massive plastic waste problem

School districts across the country are starting to recognize the need to address the staggering amount of plastic being thrown away in school lunchrooms every day. The recent Fortune article, ['Children can't advocate for themselves': American public schools have a massive plastic waste problem](#), highlights what some schools are doing to eliminate plastic waste and shares how nonprofits, businesses, and schools can work together to solve this problem.



As part of our work with the Zero Waste Schools program, we advise schools on the many different ways they can reduce plastic waste in the lunchroom. Check out the **Plastics Reduction** section in our [Zero Waste Schools Toolkit](#) for fun activities, curricula, and films that can be used in the classroom and at home.

Healthy Green Schools & Colleges



The [Healthy Green Schools & Colleges program](#) gives facility management professionals the tools to make a big difference in indoor air quality without major capital investments and will help facility professionals identify low- or no-cost

measures that they can implement. The program is designed to meet schools where they are – whether they are just getting started exploring environmental health and sustainability improvements or are already a leader. The program includes:

- A self-assessment tool
- A science-based standard with a points-based scoring system
- Guidebooks, trainings, and other resources
- Access to a peer network of sustainability professionals
- Recognition and certification

Healthy Green Schools & Colleges is a partnership between [Healthy Schools Campaign](#) and [Green Seal](#).

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 to start their own program. 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 the 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.

Illinois Green Ribbon Schools



The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Application](#) is now open! This 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 across Illinois.

Showcase your school's achievements! Top scoring schools will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program for consideration at the national level.

Contact IL Green Alliance with questions: info@illinoisgreenalliance.org or (312) 245-8300. **Application deadline: Jan. 9, 2022 at 5 pm.**

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. **Deadline: Nov. 30.**

Kids Gardening Youth Garden Grant This grant supports school and youth educational garden projects. Fifty organizations will be awarded \$500 and a collection of gardening supplies for their youth garden programs. **Deadline: Dec. 2.**

Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County 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, recycling materials, or composting food waste on-site or through a commercial service provider. **Deadline: Dec. 9 (extended!).**

Farm to School Grant for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Each grant helps implement farm to school programs that increase access to local food in eligible schools, connect children with agriculture for better health, and inspire youth to consider careers in agriculture. **Deadline: Jan. 6, 2023.**

Whole Kids Foundation Salad Bar Grant Any district or independent school participating in the National School Lunch Program can apply. The 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.**

Events

The "Story of Plastics" Panel Discussion

Nov. 14, 6 pm cst

Join Beyond Plastic's affiliate It's Easy Being Green for a free virtual screening of *The Story of Plastic* (view the film online when it's convenient for you) and a post-screening discussion with Beyond Plastic's president, Judith Enck, and Lauren Sweeney, the CEO of DeliverZero, to learn about the problem of plastic pollution & how we can fix it. Register [HERE](#).

Go Green Illinois November meeting

Nov. 15, 1 - 3 pm

Jared Patton of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning will share information on the new municipal level climate analyses created for the regional Climate Action Plan. This information will enable attendees to more effectively take action on climate in their communities. Register [HERE](#).

Federal Funding Opportunities for Schools

Nov. 17, 2 - 3 pm cst

The Center for Green Schools presents a diverse panel of leaders who will share how K-12 schools and school districts can leverage recent federal funding from ESSER, IIJA, and IRA to implement health, energy efficiency, and resilience projects.

Plastic-Free Presents: Mindful Gifting for Healthier Holidays

Nov. 17, 4 - 5 pm cst

Join Plastic Pollution Coalition to learn how we can gift mindfully for healthier, lower-waste holidays. Featuring Alejandra Warren, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Plastic Free Future and Dr. Manasa Mantravadi, Pediatrician, Founder/CEO of Ahimsa. Register [HERE](#).

RE-Generation International Youth Film Festival

Dec. 9 - 11

This film festival will feature a fabulous selection of more than 65 award-winning short films produced by passionate young filmmakers from around the world, including 20 One Earth Young Filmmakers Contest winning films.

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



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