



MARCH 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](#)

Students are taking the climate fight to their schools



Around Chicagoland, students are taking the fight for a greener future to a familiar territory close to home: schools. Student-led advocacy in several Chicago suburbs has led to school districts adopting ambitious sustainability policies, and this is a trend that's growing both locally and nationally.

In the fall of 2021, a group of students who participated in Seven Generations Ahead's youth climate advocacy program, It's Our Future (IOF), attended the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow (COP26). Energized and inspired after talking about the climate crisis on the global stage, several of these students from Oak Park River Forest High School (OPRF) decided to get involved in advocating for District 200 to adopt a sustainability policy. Soon other schools, including Evanston Township High School, adopted their own policies.

To read the full article, click [HERE](#).

Food Waste Prevention Week

April 1 - 7

Food Waste Prevention Week is a national campaign focused on raising awareness and inspiring action to reduce food waste. In 2023, there were over 600 partners across 48 states and 11 countries that participated in the mission of inspiring others to reduce



food waste through cultural change. Wasting less food helps protect the environment, addresses food insecurity, and saves money.

Here are some ways to get involved this year:

- [Resources](#) for K-12 schools
- Encourage your students to submit an entry to the [K-12 Student Art Contest](#). This year's theme is "What Does Food Mean to Me?" Prizes will be awarded to both winning students and sponsoring teachers. **Entries accepted through April 22.**
- The [Wasted Food Action Alliance](#) encourages Illinois companies and organizations (including K-12 schools) to explore the many [ways](#) they can get involved.
- Find [events](#) to attend and learn more about different ways to waste less food.

At its foundation, Food Waste Prevention Week is a social media campaign. Don't forget to follow [@FoodWastePreventionWeek](#) on Facebook and Instagram, and [@savethefoodweek](#) on Twitter!

International Compost Awareness Week

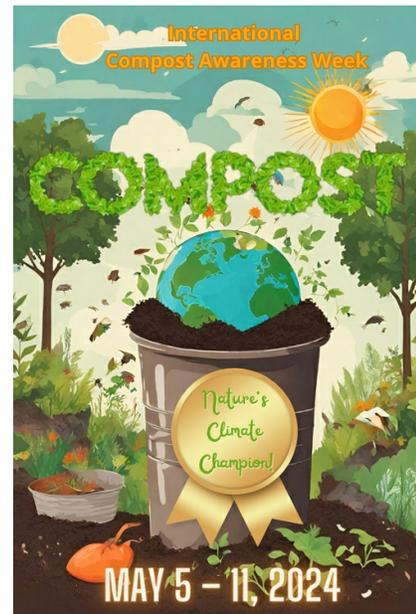
The [Illinois Food Scrap & Composting Coalition](#) (IFSCC) is inviting public and institutional libraries across Illinois to join them in celebrating International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) from **May 5-11**. The purpose of ICAW is to increase the diversion of organics from the waste stream by raising awareness and increasing participation in composting.

Learn all about ICAW on the [Compost Research and Education Foundation's](#) website. Teachers are encouraged to participate and can include compost education in their classrooms by using this curated [list](#) of lesson plans and other helpful resources.

Libraries can be educational hubs that share the message of ICAW with their patrons:

- Read through this [how-to guide](#)
- Provide [compost-related books](#) for both adults and children
- Connect with a [local garden club](#)

Sign up to participate [HERE](#).



Plastic Free Lunch Day



Participate in [Plastic Free Lunch Day USA](#) (PFLD) with schools and districts nationwide! Encourage your community to minimize single-use plastic one day during the week of **April 17 - April 24** as a starting point

for an ongoing commitment to reducing plastic every day.

With U.S. schools serving 7.35 billion meals annually, using single-use plastics in these meals significantly adds to the country's plastic waste stream. Join millions of public school students nationwide in this Earth Week climate action initiative taking place right in their cafeterias! Click [HERE](#) to learn more, and access PFLD quick start materials [HERE](#).

Consider meeting with your school's food service staff to implement one or more of these changes:

1. Replace single-use condiment packets with bulk service of sauces/dressings
2. Wrap sandwiches in bulk (put in serving trays with an aluminum foil cover instead of individually wrapped with plastic film)
3. Offer plastic utensils upon request only

Cafeteria Culture's award-winning student-led movie [Microplastic Madness](#) will screen FREE for all K-12 schools that lead a plastic-free action before April 30. [Registration](#) is open now.

Beyond Plastics Pollution online course

Immerse yourself in the issue of plastic pollution by joining Bennington College's [Beyond Plastic Pollution online course](#) this spring.

Led by Judith Enck, the founder and president of [Beyond Plastics](#), this environmental policy class is **accessible to individuals of all ages, including high school and college students**. It is designed for those who aspire to address the challenge of plastic pollution within their communities, states, and across the nation.



Wednesdays, 6 - 8 pm CST, April 17 - May 29
Cost: \$100 to audit or \$400 to receive college credit.

Learn more and register [HERE](#). Email capa@bennington.edu for more information.

One Earth Film Festival

April 17 - 21



One Earth Collective has announced the confirmed dates and featured films for the 2024 One Earth Film Festival (OEFF)! This annual week-long event aligns with Earth Day and features five days of on-site screenings and two days of virtual viewing. The films showcased are meant

to inspire and educate the public about climate change, sustainability, and the power of human involvement.

OEFF is an opportunity to raise our voices and spread awareness about the urgent need to address the climate crisis, discuss actions-based solutions, and create real and lasting change.

To see the film line up and reserve tickets, click [HERE](#).

Young Filmmakers Contest

Students from 3rd grade through age 25 are invited to submit their short environmental films to the [Young Filmmakers Contest](#) by June 25, 2024. Winning films will be screened at the Gene Siskel Film Center (Chicago, Illinois) in **Sept. 22, 2024** and/or at the One Earth Film Festival in **March 2025**. Scholarship awards, prizes, and matching grants (from \$100 to \$1000) are available for 3- to 8-minute films or 45+ second animations.

Grants and other opportunities

Plastic Free Restaurants Plastic Free Restaurants is dedicated to eliminating single-use petroleum-based products in everyday foodware. Plastic products are not only harmful to the environment but also human health. Their subsidy program is available to schools, non-profits, restaurants, and other for-profit entities to purchase safe reusable foodware products. Apply for a subsidy [HERE](#).

Indoor Air Pollution Grant Funding EPA is now seeking applications from eligible entities to assist K-12 schools in low-income, disadvantaged, and/or Tribal communities in the implementation of comprehensive indoor air quality (IAQ) management plans to address air pollution and energy efficiency consistent with EPA's recommended best practices. **Applications are due Mar. 19.**

Chicago Conservation Corps The Chicago Conservation Corps is currently recruiting for its Spring 2024 Sustainability Leadership Training Series. This program empowers Chicagoans to complete neighborhood sustainability and environmental projects that impact and engage communities across the City. RSVP for an online or in-person orientation [HERE](#) to learn more. **Applications are due Mar. 27.**

School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win equipment grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$100,000 of equipment. **Deadline: Mar. 29.**

Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant Earn up to \$2000 for the development of wildlife habitat at your school! Projects must emphasize student/youth involvement with planning, development and maintenance and increase the educational and wildlife habitat values of the site. **Applications due Nov. 30.**

Events

Loyola University Chicago: Climate Change Conference

Mar. 15 - 16, Loyola University Chicago

Loyola University Chicago's 2024 Climate Change Conference unites experts to explore global climate impact on food security and discuss strategies for equitable, resilient food systems. The event aims to deepen understanding, foster practical solutions, and inspire action for a just and sustainable world.

2024 EEAI Conference and Annual Meeting

Mar. 22 - 23, Decatur, IL

This annual conference features a keynote speaker, exhibits, concurrent sessions, hands-on workshops, and field experiences—all centered around the conference theme "EEAI Goes Wild." Engage with environmental educators from across Illinois for two days of enriching learning, networking, and entertainment!

Nourishing Minds: Exploring Child Nutrition Policy in School Food Systems

April 4, 1 pm cst

This webinar will explore the existing nature of child nutrition policy in the system of school food. Learn more about current policies, challenges faced, and ways to improve nutrition for children in schools.

Prairie Crossing Site Summit

April 17 - 18, Grayslake Illinois

Join Green Schools National Network and Best of Green Schools award recipient and Green Ribbon School Prairie Crossing Charter School for a 1.5-day exploration of Whole School Sustainability in Action.

Science in the South Conference

April 19, Carterville, Illinois

Connect with educators, explore ways to share science information, earn PD credits, and explore this year's theme: *Changing the Climate of Education*.



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