



APRIL 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](#)

Bellwood School District 88 is going zero waste!



Seven Generations Ahead (SGA) believes that climate and sustainability solutions are most effective when they're both equitable and scalable. That is why SGA, in partnership with the mayors of Broadview, Oak Park, and River Forest, as well as the Urban Efficiency Group, is co-leading the **Cross-Community Climate Collaborative** (C4). This award-winning initiative brings together 14 communities in west suburban Cook County to share sustainability best practices and work together on equitable, large-scale climate projects.

SGA's **Zero Waste Schools** (ZWS) program is excited to have recently launched its first school in a C4 community. Thurgood Marshall Elementary in Bellwood School District 88 is leading the way in zero waste lunchroom programs in the C4 communities, and it's just the beginning of an effort to scale this program to reduce food and plastic waste at schools throughout west suburban Cook County. C4 was awarded a USDA grant to support the communities of Broadview,

Bellwood and Maywood in efforts to establish curbside residential food scrap collection programs, community education on recycling and composting, and the implementation of SGA's Zero Waste Schools program in 12 schools.

Click [HERE](#) to read the full article.

Earth Day is April 22!

There are so many ways to celebrate this special day at school. Take a look at the ideas below to see what might work for you.

- Clean up your schoolyard or neighborhood with Cafeteria Culture's [Data+Action Litter Clean-Up Activity](#).
- Watch Kiss the Ground's [Compost Story](#) (6:46 min) to learn about the benefits of composting and why keeping food scraps out of the landfill is so important.
- Pack a waste-free lunch from home with SGA's [Turn a Wasteful Lunch into a Zero Waste Lunch](#) poster.
- Use SGA's [Green Locker Cleanout Guide](#) to start planning for a less wasteful end to the school year.
- Find out why food waste matters, how it impacts biodiversity, and what you can do to reduce it with the World Wildlife Fund's [Food Waste Warrior Toolkit](#).
- Discover how your school can reduce food waste with the [Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools](#).
- Watch Cafeteria Culture's award-winning student-led movie [Microplastic Madness](#). Screening FREE for all K-12 schools that lead a plastic-free action before April 30. Click [HERE](#) to register.



International Compost Awareness Week

May 5 - 11



The [Illinois Food Scrap & Composting Coalition](#) (IFSCC) invites everyone to celebrate [International Compost Awareness Week \(ICAW\) from May 5 - 11](#) by participating in a week of informative events and programs. The purpose of ICAW is to increase the diversion of organics from the waste stream by raising awareness and increasing participation in composting. The week's programming will feature the important role compost/composting plays and the myriad of benefits it offers, including a focus on this year's theme: "COMPOST...Nature's Climate Champion!"

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. Educators can also learn more about composting from SGA's [Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools](#).

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](#)

SGA programs help schools go green

K-12 schools are some of the most important institutions in a community, and also present a real opportunity for impactful sustainability initiatives. As a leader in providing sustainability support for K-12 schools, Seven Generations Ahead (SGA) has had a front seat to this growing

trend.

Around the greater Chicago area, and indeed the country, school districts are recognizing that students and parents are demanding greater environmental responsibility and awareness from them, and that teachers, administrators, and school boards are eager to support these initiatives. Additionally, sustainability programs and policies are not only good for the environment, but can also save schools money.



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

Celebrate Earth Day by reading about our beautiful planet!



Looking for a way to celebrate Earth Day in the classroom or at home? Check out the [Blueberry Award's](#) list of children's books that center around the topics of nature, nature intersections, or climate peril in developmentally appropriate, truthful ways. Evanston librarian Martha Meyer created this unique literary award in 2021 as a way to take action in the fight against climate change and to inspire young readers to do the same.

This year's [Blueberry list](#) features 35 books published in 2023, primarily for children ages 3-10.

Five tips for a successful Plastic Free Lunch Day

Take climate action in your schools by celebrating Plastic Free Lunch Day (any day **April 17 - 24**). Here are some ideas to reduce plastics that can lead to more plastic free actions.

1. Replace single-use condiment packets with bulk condiment dispensers.
2. Cafeteria Culture suggests covering sandwich pans with one piece of foil or wrap instead of wrapping each sandwich individually.
3. Eliminate plastic utensil packets and replace them with bulk utensil and napkin holders, which could be as simple as offering utensils and napkins in baskets or other containers.
4. Serve finger foods, which eliminate the need for utensils.
5. Put the utensils behind the serving line and make them available upon request.



To read our recent article about reducing single-use plastics, click [HERE](#).

One Earth Film Festival
April 17 - 23



Join the 2024 [One Earth Film Festival](#) (OEFF), in partnership with the City of Chicago, for an exciting lineup of top films during Earth Week this year. OEFF is the Midwest's premier environmental film festival. Show our Earth some love and attend either virtual or in-person watch parties taking place around the Chicagoland area. Each watch party includes expert panel discussions that will equip you with ways to take action on climate change and environmental injustices.

Registration is highly recommended and tickets to most films are free with a suggested \$8 donation. To see the full list of films click [HERE](#).

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](#).

[Urban Growers Collective Youth Corps After School Matters Program](#) is now accepting Chicago teens' applications for their Spring programs. Teens ages 14-18 can choose between two of UGC's farm sites this Spring: Roosevelt Square Farm and South Chicago Farm. Teens interested in the UGC Youth Corps will expand their understanding of urban farming, community food systems, and business development through a STEAM curriculum. **Spring programs run from Feb. 27 - May 12.**

[Science First & College First Programs for Chicago Public School students](#) Science First is a free summer science program for Chicago Public School (CPS) students in grades 6-9 that strives to increase students' knowledge and appreciation of the environment and how scientists study the environment. College First, for current CPS sophomores and juniors, offers a paid internship consisting of career mentorship, field ecology and conservation science, and college prep. **Deadline April 30.**

[Spark and Innovation Collaborative Awards](#) The Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub cultivates partnerships to support student well-being, forge connections between schools and nearby farms and enterprises, and honor the diverse cultures and communities within our region. **Applications due April 30.**

[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

[Prairie Crossing Site Summit](#)

April 17 - 18, Grayslake, IL

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.

[How to Talk to Children About Climate Change](#)

April 18, 6 - 7:30 pm, 4455 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago

Join the 47th Ward Green Council to discuss how to talk to children about the changing climate. Moderated by Heidi Stevens, attendees will receive resources to tackle this topic.

[Science in the South Conference](#)

April 19, Carterville, IL

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

SCARCE Growin' Green Garden Market and Repair Fair

May 4, 9 am - 1 pm, 800 S. Rohlwing Rd (IL Rt 53), Addison, IL

The market will have gardening equipment, books, plants, and edible treats for sale. There will be music, crafts and activities for kids in addition to Repair Fair experts to help with sharpening and fixing gardening and home tools. Pre-order rain barrels, seedlings, and compost for pick-up!

Sustainability Fest

May 8, 5 - 8 pm, Des Plaines, IL

Sustainability fest will include film screenings, activities for youth, compost education, chances to win prizes, and naturalist speakers.

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



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