



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](#)

Preventing and reducing wasted food in schools



At the most recent [Wasted Food Action Alliance](#) meeting held on August 28, SGA's Zero Waste Schools team presented about [share tables](#) and [Offer vs. Serve](#) (OVS) to a group of food waste reduction enthusiasts. While the strategies presented were school-specific, they can be adapted to a variety of institutional kitchen and cafeteria settings.

Share tables provide an opportunity for uneaten packaged food, whole fruit, or milk from the school meal to be eaten by other students during the same meal period, given to students at another time (after school snack, for example), or to be donated. Having a plan for the surplus food is key since there will inevitably be food left on the share table at the end of each day.

OVS prevents waste by giving students a choice of which meal components they would like to eat. The

ZWS team stressed that while students must take a fruit or a vegetable, milk is not required. They shared the policy that supports this idea, as well as others regarding OVS and share tables and best practices to make them a success, including food safety considerations, training for staff, and clear signage in the cafeteria.

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

Registration is now open for the Illinois Green Schools Project!

The Illinois Green Alliance's [2024-25 Illinois Green Schools Project \(IGSP\)](#) registration is now open! Participants can form a green team, identify their school's sustainability needs and goals, and reduce their school's impact by designing and implementing a personalized no-to low-cost sustainability project.



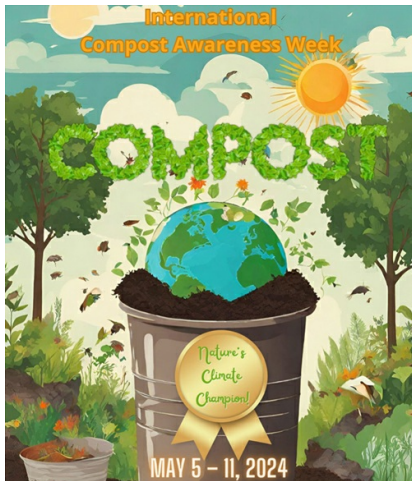
The program has been newly updated to include:

- [Three simple stages](#) to guide you through the program.
- The [IGSP Sustainability Workbook](#) to help schools take stock of their schools and create a project outline.
- Stronger ties and pathways to US Department of Education's [Green Ribbon Program](#).

A [Green Schools Mentor](#) is assigned to assist schools in completing their IGSP Sustainability Workbooks, and schools have the opportunity to apply for a mini grant of up to \$1000.

Register [HERE](#) by **Nov. 11**.

International Compost Awareness Week 2025 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, 2024. All entries should highlight the theme of ICAW 2024: **Sustainable Communities Begin with Compost!** ICAW is May 4-10, 2024.

Poster contest: Anyone around the world 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.

Bookmark contest: This year, a bookmark design contest for ages 10-13 has been introduced for younger participants. The winning design will be shared nationwide to promote composting, and the winner will receive a \$100 Amazon gift card. To read more about this contest, click [HERE](#).

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, and the winning video will be highlighted on the ICAW website. The winner will receive \$100.

Plastic Free Lunch Day

The biannual [Plastic Free Lunch Day \(PFLD\)](#) is coming up on **Nov. 18 - 22**. PFLD is presented by Cafeteria Culture and

the Urban School Food Alliance and is an easy way for schools to ease into reducing disposable packaging and foodware. Schools can participate for one day, a couple days, or the whole week.

PFLD programming can include:

- **Screening the film *Microplastic Madness***, the award-winning (and very engaging) student-led film in your school or classroom for free Sept. 9 - Nov. 30.
- **Easy Action Options**
 - Waste audits
 - Plastic foodware reduction: bulk condiment dispensers, individual utensil dispensers, serving finger-foods. There is an action for everyone!
 - **EasyStart K-12 packet**
 - **Zero waste** lunches from home
- **Watching *School Food Directors Talk Cafeteria Plastic Reduction*** webinar (password:1=QV#86O) Dr. Katie Wilson, USFA Executive Director, & Johannes van der Pool, Child Nutrition Services Director, (Fremont, California) talk cafeteria plastics!



Join the movement! Over 2,000 schools participated nationwide during the Spring PFLD!

Webinar: Center for Environmental Health's *Ditching Disposables 2.0: A Toolkit for Healthier Foodware in K-12 Schools*

Sept. 18, 1 pm CST



The **Center for Environmental Health** (CEH) is hosting a webinar to dive into their newly updated resource: ***Ditching Disposables 2.0!***

This webinar will focus on the revised toolkit which is designed to help schools transition from single-use foodware to reusable, non-toxic alternatives. This shift is important for creating a safer and healthier learning environment by reducing waste and minimizing students' exposure to harmful chemicals.

CEH's Green and Clean Program Coordinator, Ben Schleifer, will provide an overview of the toolkit, including updates, best practices, and strategies for implementation in schools and other institutions. Stephanie Willits, Fremont Unified School District's Recycling Coordinator, and Tarun Rajesh, a high school junior and CEH intern, will present about their experience switching from single-use to reusable food ware in their respective districts and how they advocated for this change.

To learn more and to register for the webinar, click **[HERE](#)**.

Chicago Cub's Education Day: The Great Apple Crunch with Stade's Farm!

Sept. 18

Calling all Chicagoland K-5 teachers! Start off the 2024-25 school year with a class trip to Wrigley Field Wednesday, September 18. Celebrate the start up of Illinois orchard season with fun and educational programming before the Cubs take on the Oakland Athletics.



During the pregame programming students will listen in as local orchard grower, Vern Stade, shares education about how apples grow at his McHenry, IL orchard. Students will also have the opportunity to compost apple cores and make this a zero waste event. Join us to Crunch! into local apples and discover how tasty a fresh, local apple can be.

The 11th [Great Illinois Apple Crunch](#), being held this year on Oct. 10, is a celebration of fresh, local apples that takes place on the second Thursday of October, during National Farm to School Month. Any group in Illinois can celebrate the Great Apple Crunch. K-12 schools, homeschool groups, early care, farms, farmers markets and orchards, families at home, businesses, organizations and agencies can buy local apples and Crunch!

For more information and to register, click [HERE](#).

Pumpkin Smash 2024!



Don't trash it, smash it! Facilitated by our friends at [SCARCE](#), Pumpkin Smash is an annual effort to divert pumpkins from landfills by providing locations for residents to drop off jack-o-lanterns to be composted.

Some towns will SMASH on **November 2** and others will SMASH on **November 9** for twice the opportunity to compost those old pumpkins and gourds. It's a great project for school environmental or service clubs and community groups.

Interested in hosting a Pumpkin Smash at your school or in your neighborhood? 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 and register your site [HERE](#).

SWANCC school program registration is now OPEN!

The Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) members have an amazing opportunity to apply for the school programs! Staff availability for in-person presentations fills quickly. Please submit registration requests as soon as possible to help make sure you receive a spot.

SWANCC's signature program, “**Taking Care of Our Earth**”, is differentiated according to grade level and is a prerequisite to other specialty programs on soil, water, resources, and waste audits. However, SWANCC's extremely popular, brief, walk-through audits, allowing SWANCC staff

to offer quick, personalized, suggestions are available with any program.

All programs are FREE to schools within a member community. **Don't forget, SWANCC offers \$500 grants!**

Please follow the links below for more information:

- [School Program Guide](#)
- [Registration Request](#)
- [\\$500 Waste Reduction Grant Information](#)

Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County
SCHOOL PROGRAM GUIDE

There is no cost for SWANCC programs. On-site programs are scheduled based on staff availability. Schools must be a SWANCC member community to qualify.

To request a program, please return the:

- Registration Request Form

Contact:
Theresa Greinig
Education Coordinator
theresg@swancc.org
(847) 243-4706

For a preview of SWANCC's Additional Educational Resources **CLICK THE TITLES BELOW.** Use the "Registration Request Form" link above to register.

- Pre-recorded Video Fieldtrip Presentations
- Activity Resource Guides - PreK / K - Grades 1-3
- \$500 Waste Grants

SWANCC Member Communities: Barrington, Buffalo Grove, Elk Grove Village, Evanston, Glenview, Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Mount Prospect, Niles, Palatine, Park Ridge, Rosemont Heights, Skokie, South Barrington, Wheeling, Winnetka, and Winthrop.

Taking Care of Our Earth - SWANCC's Signature Program
This popular, fun, interactive, large group differentiated grade level program introduces sustainability. Concepts include the environmental R's - REDUCE - REUSE - RECYCLE - RESPECT - and RESPONSIBILITY.
Grade Level: K-12
Program length: 45-60 min

Advanced Program Topics
After completion of SWANCC's signature **Taking Care of Our Earth** program, students are eligible for one advanced program within the same school year.

Water Discovering the Water Cycle and Pollution: This session will review the role of water, how it gets from one place to another, and conservation. Students will become "droplets" to discover where water spends its time (i.e. oceans, rivers, lakes, etc), the forms it can take, and pollution. Grade Level: 1-3 Program length: 60-75 min	Soil Beneath Our Feet: Soil is a resource made up of rocks and minerals, dead plants, animal matter, living organisms, gases, and water. Students will investigate soil composition, air, and water content and review the importance of composting. Students will also have the opportunity to observe live red worms used in vermicomposting. Grade Level: 2-6 Program length: 60-75 min	Resources Renewable vs. Nonrenewable Resources: Learn the meaning of renewable and nonrenewable resources as well as review reusable and recyclable resources. Through a hands-on game students will realize what happens when the demand on resources is too high and discover the meaning of conservation. Grade Level: 3-6 Program length: 60-75 min
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School Waste Audit
Don't Waste Away! A school waste audit is a great way to determine what's being thrown away every day, help reduce waste, and improve recycling success. Part environmentalist, part archeologist, students will take on the role of detective as they conduct the investigation. The results will be eye-opening!
Grade Level: K-12
Program length: 30-60 min

Quick 15-20 minute walk-through audits without students are also available.

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](#).

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.**

Youth Outdoor Equity Leadership Fund The Children & Nature Network invites young leaders in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada between the ages of 16 and 30 to request up to \$500 to grow professionally as a leader in the movement or to implement projects that create change in equitable access to nature, community health, well being, and justice. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

Chef Ann Foundation: Get Schools Cooking (GSC) This program is an intensive 3-year assessment and strategic planning opportunity that provides public K-12 schools with the operational knowledge to transition from a heat-&-serve to a scratch-cooking operational model. **Applications due Sept. 30.**

Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Book/Project Grant Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom is offering two grants for Illinois teachers.

- **Teacher Project Grants** provide up to \$300 to PreK-12th grade teachers for projects that promote agricultural literacy in the classroom. **Deadline: Oct. 18.**
- **Teacher Book Grants** provide up to \$250 in books from a pre-selected list of titles to help teachers integrate agriculture into their curricula. **Deadline: Oct. 18.**

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

[Cooking with Kids in the School Garden](#)

Sept. 19, 6 pm

Join KidsGardening for a webinar exploring the exciting world of nutrition right from your school garden.

[One Earth Film Festival](#)

Sept. 22, 11:30 am, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago

One Earth Film Festival is hosting its global awards celebration for a viewing of the best short environmental films from youth around the world. The viewing will be in person at the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago, but there will be a virtual option for those who cannot attend the in-person event.

[Faith in Place's 2024 Green Team Summit](#)

Sept. 22 - 24

Join Faith in Place to experience diverse faith and spiritual practices and learn how they interweave with environmental care. The free summit will feature four sessions, diverse speakers, and plenty of opportunities for networking. There are options for in-person and online events. Register [HERE](#).

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



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