



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](#)

ZWS in Action!



The [Zero Waste Schools](#) (ZWS) program has had a busy fall working with numerous school districts across the Chicagoland area to help move composting, recycling, and other waste reduction initiatives forward. Recently, the ZWS team has been everywhere from lunchrooms to baseball fields with the goal of providing education and increasing waste reduction practices.

On September 18, the [Illinois Farm to School Network](#) hosted an [Apple Crunch event](#) at Wrigley Field. ZWS staff helped attendees compost their apple cores after everyone learned about local apples, including hearing from a local orchard, and crunched into their apples together. The Apple Crunch at Wrigley is a good example of how zero waste practices can be incorporated into any school activity or event.

Across town, ZWS has been able to provide assistance in setting up lunchroom recycling and commercial composting at schools in Bellwood, Broadview, and Maywood with help from a USDA grant. [Thurgood Marshall Elementary](#) in Bellwood School District 88, [Roosevelt Elementary](#) in School District 89, and [E.F. Lindop School](#) in School District 92 have all started offering share tables, recycling, and composting in their lunchrooms and kitchens. The ZWS team's work in District 88 also includes providing training for all food service staff on share tables and Offer vs. Serve implementation, which will further enable the district to reduce food waste. Our partnership with these communities includes working with organics haulers, food service providers, and school staff to ensure all stakeholders are involved in order to ensure long term sustainability.

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

Its Our Future COP29 live stream

Nov. 14, 10:10 am cst

The United Nation's Climate Summit is taking place **Nov. 11 - Nov. 22 in Baku, Azerbaijan**. This year's Summit, or COP29, will be centered around climate finance, gender equality, and youth empowerment. COP29 will integrate these themes across all topic areas while continuing to strategize efforts to limit rising temperatures.

Five remarkable Chicagoland high school [It's Our Future](#) (IOF) students, Oak Park and River Forest High School Superintendent, Greg Johnson, and Oak Park President, Vicki Scaman, will be attending the COP29. They will have the opportunity to connect with youth and Indigenous leaders from across the globe and share their perspectives with elected officials and decision makers.



Join IOF for a live stream event on Nov. 14 at 10:10 am cst where they will talk about their experiences at the Summit. Please help spread the word and, educators, we encourage you to tune in with your classes! Register [HERE](#).

Follow IOF: [@iofyouth](#) Instagram

Planning 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, pinecones, 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

Making dishes from scratch involves less plastic packaging. Opt for glass or paper packaging over plastic, when possible. Purchasing local foods helps minimize packaging, reduces the food's travel footprint, and supports smaller, independent farms and businesses.

Reusable containers

Thanksgiving is known for the plentiful amount of leftovers – for many people this is the best part! For those delicious leftovers, provide guests reusable containers, or ask them to bring their own.

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 or drop-off sites. If these are 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 & Composting Coalition](#).

Reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost to see how close to zero waste you can get this Thanksgiving!

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 activities can include:

- Hosting a free screening of [Microplastic Madness](#), the award-winning (and very engaging) student-led film, through Nov. 30
- Conducting a [lunchroom waste audit](#)
- Plastic foodware reduction: bulk condiment dispensers, individual utensil dispensers, serving finger-foods, etc.
- [Zero waste lunches](#) from home



Illinois Green Ribbon Schools



The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Application](#) is currently accepting submissions! This program celebrates schools with active initiatives and unwavering dedication to fostering sustainability awareness and education. In collaboration with the [Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Green Alliance](#) invites applications from schools across the state. Participating in this program provides an excellent opportunity to highlight your school's green initiatives. Schools that achieve top scores

will have the chance to be nominated for the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program at the national level.

Contact IL Green Alliance with questions: info@illinoisgreenalliance.org or (312) 245-8300. **Submit applications to greenribbon@isbe.net by Dec. 20.**

We Compost Recognition Program

[We Compost](#) is a free recognition program of the [Illinois Food Scrap and Composting Coalition](#) that can promote your school's compost program across a broad network. Highlighting your school's composting program can compel others schools to start their own. If your school is composting food scraps (either commercially or onsite), become a We Compost partner and enjoy the following benefits:



- 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 [IFSCC's website](#) which will allow you to suggest 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.

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.**

[2024 Youth Gardening Grant](#) Since 1982, the Youth Garden Grant has supported school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for students and their communities. **Deadline to apply is Nov. 22.**

[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 Dec. 4.**

[Supporting Community Agriculture and Local Education Systems \(SCALES\)](#) is now offering support and funding, through the USDA, for projects focused on building and strengthening relationships within the school food system. **Applications due Dec. 13.**

[EPA: President's Environmental Student and Teacher Awards](#) EPA is requesting applications for the 2025 President's Environmental Youth Awards and Presidential Innovation Awards for Environmental Educators. The awards recognize outstanding environmental stewardship projects from students and outstanding school educators who integrate environmental education into their school. **Applications due Jan. 15.**

Events

[LUC Food Week](#)

Nov. 11 - 15, Loyola University Chicago

Hosted by Loyola Dining and the Office of Sustainability, this is your chance to dive into the world of sustainable food systems.

[America Recycles Day](#)

Nov. 15

The [National Recycling Coalition](#) and [Keep America Beautiful](#) have joined together to celebrate the benefits of recycling. Recycling is a great way to reuse valuable items and reduce our footprint on earth. Currently, there are over 3,000 events happening nationally!

[Young Filmmakers Contest In Person Workshops for Grades 3-8](#)

Dec. 8, 1 - 4:30 pm, River Forest Depot

Students in grades 3 to 5 will learn the basics of how to make a film from professional filmmakers. Instruction will cover story, framing, lighting, audio, editing, and production.

[Center for Green Schools: Writing Workshop](#)

Dec. 9 - 10, 2024, Washington, D.C.

Center for Green Schools will bring together school district staff and industry experts for a training focused on updating and developing material specifications for healthy and sustainable schools.

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