

## MAY 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](#)

### Details make the difference at Grant Elementary's zero waste launch

Bellwood School District 88 has been deeply committed to its sustainability goals, and now it has launched its fourth [Zero Waste Schools \(ZWS\) program](#). The launch at [Grant Elementary](#) in Melrose Park took place on April 16th, and is the last school within the [Cross Community Climate Collaborative](#) (C4) to launch this school year.

To say the launch was a success is an understatement. Grant Elementary went from filling 14 bags of lunchroom garbage per day to filling just one and a half. With a total of 205 pounds of waste produced on launch day, only 18 pounds of it went to the landfill. The rest was recycled, composted, put on the share table, or were liquids that could be poured down the drain. This means Grant Elementary kept more than 90% of their lunchroom waste out of the landfill! ZWS Senior Program Manager, Becky Brodsky, attributes this impressive outcome to the engagement of lunchroom staff and their embrace of small changes that made a big difference.

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



### Reduce and reuse with a green locker clean-out



The end of the school year is approaching and with it, the opportunity to teach students valuable lessons about reducing and reusing by holding a green locker clean-out! With just a little advanced planning, your school can keep mountains of materials out of landfills.

SGA's [Green Locker Clean-Out Guide](#) can help you get started. The guide will take you through all the steps of planning and implementation, providing best practices and tips along the way.

During a green locker clean-out, sorting stations are set up for students to sort their unwanted locker or desk contents into categories of Donate, Recycle, and Landfill. Donated items can be made available to other students and staff in the school or donated to organizations such as [CCRx](#), [The WasteShed](#), [SCARCE](#), [Greener Good](#), or other local nonprofits. Hosting a clean-out can be a great student-led project. Get your Green Team on it!

**In addition, SWANCC suggests the following ideas:**

- Encourage students to take home supplies they can reuse next year.
- Encourage teachers to stock up.
- Set up donation stations for students to place items that can be reused by students in need and school supply drives.
- Conduct a "supply swap" where students can trade items with each other rather than tossing potentially useful items.
- Save supplies for students in need at your school.

## Continuing the fight for local food in schools despite federal funding cuts



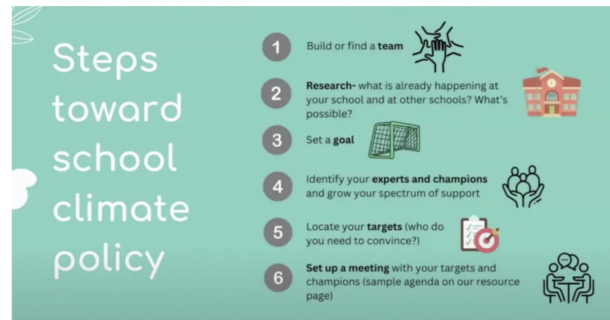
As the saying goes, it isn't easy being green. But it's gotten even harder in recent months. Federal funding cuts are hitting environmental programs across the country, and are taking their toll right here in Illinois, as well. Seven Generations Ahead (SGA) has always been committed to building a sustainable, local food shed, and we remain steadfast in this work. But the decision in March to terminate USDA funding programs that support local food purchasing for schools will have far-reaching effects, with serious consequences for farmers and school food programs, and

ultimately, all the children who depend on this funding for nutritious, local school meals.

In March, both the [Patrick Leahy Farm to School grant program](#) and the [Local Food for Schools and Child Care](#) (LFSCC) program were canceled. These USDA grant programs both provided critical funding for schools to be able to buy from local farms. The impact of this loss will be felt by the schools and the farmers that depended on this source of income, and by the students who will miss out on nutritious, local meals.

## Planting seeds: How school climate policies grow change

Students, administrators and board members came together on April 8th for an [Intergenerational School Climate Policy Workshop](#), in which they shared success stories and best practices for advancing climate policy in schools. All agreed that this work is critically important as a way to empower youth, combat disinformation, and make a meaningful difference on climate. Strong policy in schools has a ripple effect, as students carry what they learn back to their families and communities, and ultimately into their futures.



[Seven Generations Ahead](#) (SGA) staff and [It's Our Future](#) (IOF) youth were instrumental in the creation and implementation of a comprehensive climate policy at Oak Park River Forest High School (OPRF). The policy has led to many great initiatives, including the installation of a geothermal system, and they even have student interns working with the installers!

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

## The case for bulk serving



The typical lunchroom cafeteria is often fast-paced with many moving parts. Students need to get their lunch and eat within a short period of time. Many lunchrooms opt to use single-use disposable products on the lunch line in order to save time. While these items may cut down a bit on serving time, they create a disproportionate amount of waste and send students the message that single-use is OK. Switching to bulk serving reduces waste, models sustainable behavior, and can also save schools money.

Reducing milk and carton waste is a great place to start addressing disposable packaging. Typically milk is served in 8 oz. cartons and, with a majority of students drinking milk every day, the waste accumulates fast. Fortunately, [The Chef Ann Foundation](#) has recently re-opened their [bulk milk grants](#) for schools. Bulk milk dispensers eliminate the need for single-use cartons while allowing students to take their desired portion of milk. Applications for the bulk milk grants are due by **June 26, 2025**.

[Whole Kids](#) is offering their [salad bar grant](#) to schools to increase fruit and vegetable consumption while also reducing excess packaging. This grant provides all the materials necessary to start and maintain a salad bar which includes the bar, chill pads, pans and tongs! **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

Consider applying for these grants to help your school get closer to zero waste!

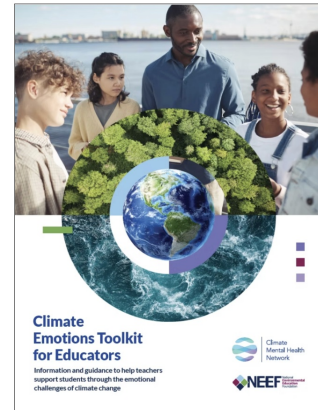


# Climate Action Resources



## K-12 Food Rescue: A Food Waste Solution Podcast

Follow the journey of students and adult leaders across the country to lead the #FoodIsNotTrash movement in their school districts as they seek food waste solutions. Episodes include stories from food rescue leaders in different regional areas such as Burbank, New Jersey, and Washington. Listen in and learn what others are doing to reduce food waste in schools!



## Climate Emotions in the Classroom: A Toolkit for Educators

Through extensive surveys and discussions with educators, the Climate Mental Health Network identified the need for tools to help teachers support students' mental health and manage their own climate-related emotions. This free toolkit equips teachers with everything they need to address climate emotions in the classroom.

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## Grants and other opportunities

**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.**

**SWANCC Clean Up Grant** SWANCC members can apply for a clean up grant to use during the month of April (or any month)! Participants will receive free materials and a log to record their results. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

**Brower Youth Awards** The Brower Youth Awards are looking to recognize a young leader of an environmental group or effort. Youth environmental change leaders ages 13 to 22 living in North America are encouraged to apply. Recipients will receive a \$3,000 cash prize, a short film produced about their work, a trip to participate in leadership development activities, flights, meals, and lodging accommodations. **Apply by May 20.**

**One Earth Young Filmmakers Contest** Create a 3-8 minute film that inspires change or action in the areas of climate, energy, food, transportation, waste, water, or wildlife and ecosystems. **Submit by May 25.**

**Carton Council Grant** The Carton Council is offering grants of up to \$5,000 to help K-12 schools in the U.S. and Canada establish, enhance or expand their carton recycling programs. Grant funds can be used to purchase sorting equipment or collection bins, create communications, print signage, establish a "green team," and more! **Apply by May 31.**

**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. **Apply by Dec. 3.**

## Events

### International Compost Awareness Week

**May 4 - 10**

Check out ICAW's composting events to celebrate the end of a fantastic week. Saturday, May 9th, will be focusing on adventures in composting with composting related events happening from Chicagoland to East St. Louis! These events include farm and garden tours, vermicomposting demos, vineyard tours and much more.

### Spring Plant Sale and Farm Festival

**May 10, 8 am - 5 pm, The Prairie Crossing Conservation Farm**

Join Liberty Prairie and Grayslake High School District 127 for their annual Spring Plant Sale and Farm Festival where students will be selling vegetables, herbs, and flowers.

### Zero Waste USA: Networking Event

**May 21, 2 pm**

Zero Waste USA is hosting a virtual networking event designed to bring students, affiliates, and interested individuals together to learn and build the zero waste industry.

### Teach Climate Network Summer Institute

**July 14 - 17**

Join the Summer Institute for a virtual two-day conference plus one regional cohort day focused on climate change education. This conference is where educators are celebrated and their roles as community change makers are valued.

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



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