

Zero Waste Schools



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Seven
Generations
Ahead



Zero Waste Schools Program

SGA's Zero Waste Schools (ZWS) Program empowers Chicago area schools to drastically reduce waste, fighting both the climate crisis and food insecurity, through efficient resource use, source reduction, recycling, composting, and food recovery.

- Help schools plan effective waste reduction strategies
- Provide on-the-ground support for operational changes
- Educate students and staff about the **how** and **why** of going zero waste
- Connect schools with local partners and opportunities
- Drive policy changes and infrastructure development that promote zero waste

Why compost in schools?

- Over 7 billion school meals are served each year in the U.S. much of that food is going to landfills rather than nourishing students
- **WASTED FOOD** is 21% of material sent to landfills, Wasted food in landfills creates **METHANE**, a potent greenhouse gas
- By composting, food waste will be turned into a nutrient rich soil amendment rather than emitting harmful emissions
- Gives students something positive that they can do on a daily basis to combat climate change
- Empowers students and provides leadership opportunities
- Opportunity for curricular connections



Onsite Composting (like backyard composting)

- Fruit & vegetable scraps only
- Mixed with yard trimmings in outdoor compost bin
- Great learning activity for students
- More labor intensive
- Small capacity



Commercial Composting

- Typically ALL food scraps (inc. meat & dairy)
- Hauled to a commercial facility for composting
- Significant waste diversion
- Relatively easy to manage once in place
- Fees for hauling



Getting started

- Bring ideas to administration
- Build a Zero Waste Team
- Decide where you want to start
- Research haulers
- Tour local composting school
- Purchase supplies
- Provide education and training (why and how) for staff and students
- Implementation
- Communicate and celebrate success



Tips for success

- Principal, teacher, custodial, and kitchen staff buy-in
- Systematize the process at the district level
- Start with elementary schools
- Include custodial and food service staff in the planning process
- Education for all students and staff (with periodic refreshers)
- Create a volunteer schedule and post it in the lunchroom
- Plan to conduct follow-up waste audits



Hauling

- Do they accept compostable liner bags?
- Do they accept compostable food ware?
- What type and size outdoor containers are provided? Are they lined?
- What days are they in the area?
- Do they charge by container or only for full containers?
- How easy is it to make adjustments to service levels/size?
- Is there a discount for route density?



Education

- Videos
- Interactive games to engage students
- Signage
- Make announcements during each lunch period
- Morning announcements
- Curricular connections through inquiry based learning, cross curricular projects, STEAM



Wrappers, gum, utensils, plastic #6, food soiled containers	Clean, empty cans and plastics #1-5	All food & soiled paper NO PLASTIC
		
		
LANDFILL	RECYCLING	COMPOST

Why Compost?
Food scraps in landfills break down to produce methane gas, a contributor to **climate change** that is 84 times more harmful than carbon dioxide.

When in doubt, throw it out!

Monitoring to avoid contamination

- Zero Waste Agents/Ambassadors
- Class job
- Rotate classes
- Staff supervision
- Organize volunteers through Green Team
- Front of the lunchline pass for volunteers
- Build it into curriculum
- Student Council or other volunteer organization



Lunchroom sorting station



GARDEN COMPOST

COMPOST PARA EL JARDÍN

FRUIT & VEGGIE SCRAPS ONLY
SOLO RESTOS DE FRUTA Y VERDURAS



4

COMPOST

ALL FOOD
TODA COMIDA



FOOD-SOILED PAPER
PAPEL MANCHADO DE COMIDA



NAPKINS
TOALLAS DE PAPEL



PIZZA BOXES
CAJAS DE PIZZA

NO PLASTIC
NO PLÁSTICO

Logistics



GREEN COMPOSTABLE BAGS or BUCKETS WITH FOOD SCRAPS/ ORGANICS



TOTER or DUMPSTER for ORGANICS (COMPOST)



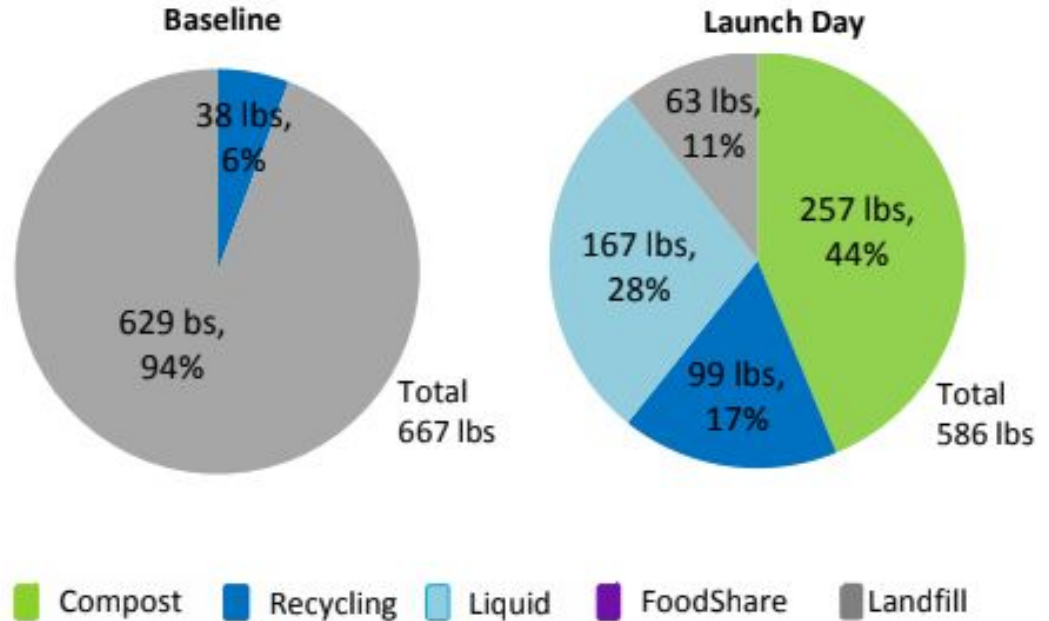
Impact: Diversion with recycling and commercial composting

Launch day at Sandoval Elementary
(1,015 K-5 students)

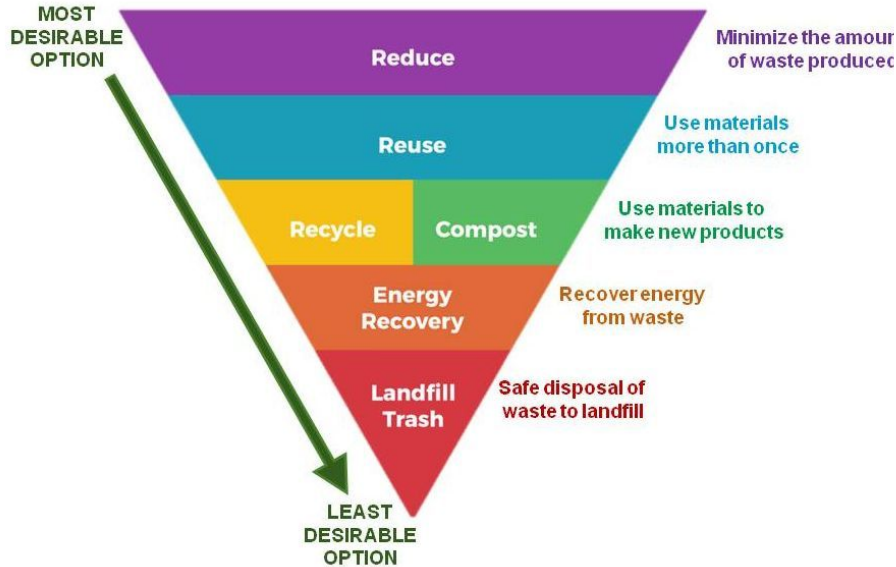


The lunchroom went from 25 trash bags per day to 2 bags per day.

Waste Audits of Cafeteria/Kitchen

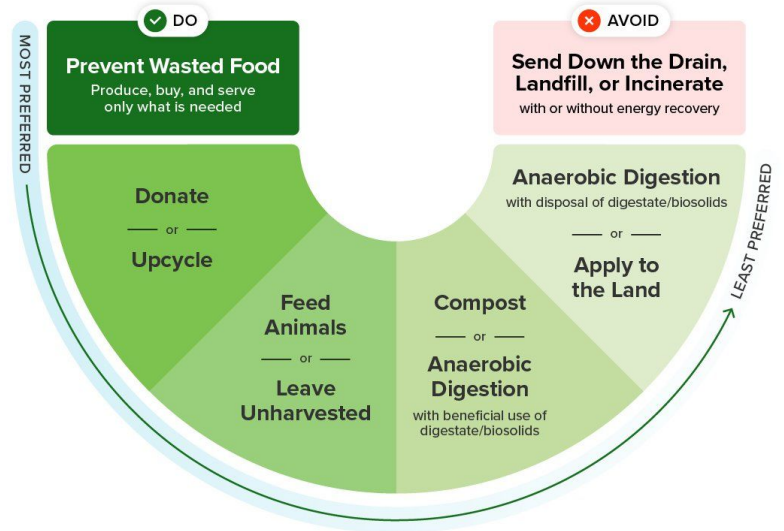


Getting to zero waste



Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food

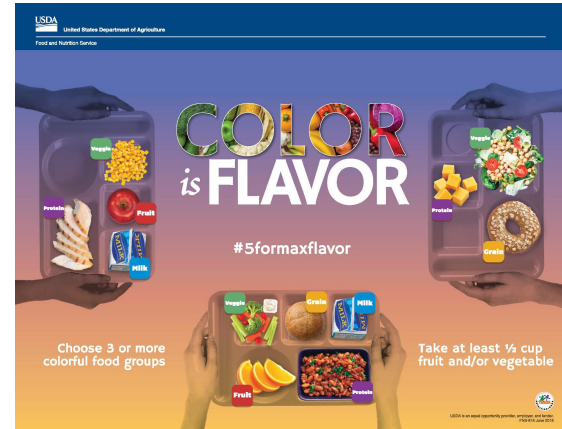


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Source: Solana Center for Environmental Innovation

Food waste reduction

- 'Offer vs Serve' method
- Scheduling
 - Longer seated lunch time
 - Recess before lunch
- Menu planning & food preparation
 - Student taste tests
 - Serve cut fruit, instead of whole fruit
 - Measuring food waste in the kitchen
- Share Tables
- Provide water to reduce milk waste



Resources

[Sign up for our Zero Waste Schools newsletter](#)

- [Zero Waste Schools Toolkit](#)
- [Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools](#)
- [Dual Language Lunchroom Sorting Signs](#)
- [Zero Waste Ambassador Guide](#)
- [Educational video/presentation](#)
- [Zero Waste Lunch Flyer](#)
- [Composting and Recycling Guide](#)

