

# About The Green Lunchroom Challenge

According to the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), food production represents 10 percent of the total US energy budget, uses 50 percent of US land, and accounts for 80 percent of the freshwater we consume — yet, 40 percent of food in the US goes uneaten. In 2013, 49.1 million Americans lived in food insecure households, including 33.3 million adults and 15.8 million children. Food waste is clearly both a tremendous problem and opportunity for improving the sustainability of our society. Reducing food waste in schools not only helps to ensure those precious expended resources are providing nutrition as intended, but also provides the opportunity to set important examples of conservation and systems thinking among our impressionable youth, which will hopefully stay with them as they become our next generation of leaders.

*“In 2013, 49.1 million Americans lived in food insecure households, including 33.3 million adults and 15.8 million children.”*

The Green Lunchroom Challenge is a voluntary pledge program for schools to improve the sustainability of their food service operations. By registering, participants are accepting the challenge to reduce and prevent food waste in their facilities.

The Challenge involves suggested activities that range in complexity and commitment, to allow participants to best suit their situation, budget and available community resources. Participants are not required to complete activities, but with each activity that is completed successfully, they earn points and can be recognized as having achieved different levels of accomplishment.

## Levels of Accomplishment (noted on the [Participants](#) page)

**Bronze:** 250 to 500 points

**Silver:** 501 to 1000 points

**Gold:** 1001 to 1900 points

**Platinum:** 1901 or more points

Resources and guidance are available on the Challenge website and from [ISTC](#) technical assistance staff for each recommended activity.

In addition to typical activities related to food preparation, presentation, and waste disposal, schools may also choose to integrate food waste prevention and reduction into curricula, helping students learn about food security and hunger, composting, the circular economy, and stewardship.

Participants that have achieved different levels of accomplishment are [highlighted](#) on the Challenge website.

## Why Play?

- Reduce food waste
- Receive free technical guidance on cafeteria operations and menu creation
- Save money and resources
- Easy way to measure progress
- Earn recognition for your achievements

## How It Works

- Register your school
- Choose [activities](#) you want to complete
- Find guides, curricula, and technical support on our online portal
- Submit documentation of completed activities via email
- Earn points
- Get recognized

The Challenge is open to all K-12 schools in Illinois. Schools or organizations outside Illinois can also register and participate; their geographic locations will be clearly designated in parentheses on the Participants list on the Challenge web site.

To earn recognition, a school, district, or other organization must sign up and submit activity documentation as indicated on each activity page. Note that if activity documentation is submitted at any time during the year and sufficient points are earned for a "Level of Accomplishment," your organization will be recognized accordingly on the Challenge web site. [Download a one-page flyer on the program.](#)

For more information contact Joy Scrogum: [jscrogum@illinois.edu](mailto:jscrogum@illinois.edu) or (217) 333-8948.

***Launched with a grant from US EPA Region 5; note that the grant period for this project has passed. The site and suggested activities remain available for the reference of interested parties, and participants may still submit activity documentation and contact ISTC for guidance. However, the project is currently unfunded and this site is minimally maintained. Be advised that there may be delays in receiving responses to inquiries, as project staff have been assigned other duties which must take priority over efforts associated with the Challenge.***

Follow Us  

[Green Lunchroom Challenge](#) [About](#) | [Activities](#) | [UI Web Privacy Notice](#) 

**I ILLINOIS**  
Illinois Sustainable Technology Center  
PRAIRIE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

© 2018 University of Illinois Board of Trustees