

Evanston Township High School

2026 First Place - High School Division



The Project:

Evanston Township's Green Team led a large-scale effort to reduce waste by right-sizing classroom and office trash systems. By removing 350 excess garbage bins and standardizing recycling access, the project reduced plastic bag waste, improved disposal habits, and demonstrated how simple, data-driven operational changes can create significant environmental impact across a large school community.

Project Focus: Waste Management

Students involved: 20

Staff Involved: 6

Location: Evanston, IL

Students impacted: 3600+



The approach is simple, scalable, and highly effective, making it a model that can be replicated in schools and office buildings anywhere to drive meaningful and immediate Sustainability improvements



The Process:

Students from the ETHS Sustainability Club, E-town Sunrise organization, and additional community service volunteers partnered with operations and custodial staff to conduct a building-wide waste audit, identifying redundant and underused trash bins. After developing a rightsizing plan, students created and distributed a school-wide flyer explaining the purpose of the changes and gathered feedback from department chairs. On January 31, 2026, students and staff worked together to remove over 350 garbage cans from classrooms and offices, while establishing standardized 1:1 landfill-to-recycling stations. Students continued the project by collecting feedback through a Google Form, reinforcing behavior change through education and daily practice, and monitoring usage patterns to refine the system.

The Outcomes:

By removing more than 350 bins, the school is eliminating over 64,000 plastic trash bags annually and saving an estimated \$5,000–\$6,000 per year in materials. Students and staff have become more intentional about waste disposal, with increased use of centralized recycling stations and a reduction in landfill waste driven by convenience-based habits. The project also improved custodial efficiency and created cleaner, more standardized spaces. With its clear results and scalable model, the initiative is positioned to expand to additional areas and serve as a replicable strategy for other schools. Moving forward, ETHS hopes to grow their environmental club and expand their rightsizing project to continue streamlining waste systems throughout the campus.

