



SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER



December 2024



Dear ISZL community,

Welcome to our first Sustainability newsletter! With our whole school objective 4 — to position ISZL at the forefront of environmental sustainability among local and international schools — we have started engaging with our community to learn more about our ecosystem, but this is reciprocal; we'd like to share what is happening related to sustainability, hopefully celebrating progress, and also amplifying change and best practices. We aim for three newsletters per year.

OPERATIONS UPDATE

Swiss Renewable Solutions AG (SRS) and the ISZL team is proud to announce that the installation of solar panels (620 modules covering a surface area of 1,208.93 m² with an expected annual output of 283,408.56 kWh) on the roof of the High School's Triple Gym was successful and that the system is productive since Monday, 11 November. We would like to highlight that this was done at zero cost for ISZL but at the same time will reduce our energy cost with immediate effect for the years to come.

ISZL has a rich history of sustainability efforts, deeply rooted in the Youth Forum Switzerland (YFS). Since its inception in 2018, YFS has been a platform for students to transition from discussion to action. In 2019, the YFS Initiatives Team was formed, leading to significant (student-led) projects like the Zero Carbon Initiative. This initiative paved the way for various sustainability efforts, including the installation of charging stations for staff vehicles, the use of electric vehicles for campus transport, and the installation of the solar panels.

SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION:



DEVELOPING ISZL'S SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

To shape our Sustainability Strategy, we formed a sustainability committee with representatives from teaching and non-teaching staff, leadership, parents, and students. This group meets biweekly, when possible, and has begun working with [Klima Charta, Zug](#), a consulting service subsidised by the Kanton of Zug.

During the research phase, we invited staff, students, and parents to contribute ideas via Padlet, using the Compass for Sustainability methodology to gather diverse perspectives. Contributions helped shape four key themes:

1. **Nature as Inspiration for Wellbeing**
2. **Regenerative Learning**
3. **Operations** (covering areas like travel, waste, food, energy, and purchasing)
4. **Connections, Community, and Communication**



Our goal is to tap into the expertise within our community and empower students to turn their learning into action, designing solutions that make our corner of the world a better place.

We're starting with "quick wins"—simple, visible actions with clear outcomes to build momentum and demonstrate progress. However, many sustainability challenges are more complex and require collaborative, long-term solutions. Through clear communication and collective effort, we aim to inspire and drive meaningful change.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

Did you know that ISZL's first carbon footprint was calculated by Environmental Systems & Societies (ESS) student Maria-Luisa Gopsill for her Extended Essay? Using 2013-14 data and an early MyClimate calculator, she found the High School emitted 1617.6 tonnes of CO₂, with 4.76 tonnes per student annually. In 2017, MyClimate provided ISZL's first whole-school carbon footprint based on 2014-15 data, revealing 2755 tonnes of CO₂-eq and 2.29 tonnes per student. Our most recent update in 2023, based on 2021 data, calculated ISZL's carbon footprint at 982 tonnes CO₂-eq and 0.79 tonnes per student.

Although the total emissions vary, the largest contributors each time we have conducted a carbon footprint are food and beverages, transportation for trips and excursions, commuting and energy use with Riverside contributing more transportation and Zug more food and energy emissions.

As we move forward, ISZL plans to calculate our carbon footprint in-house to enhance accuracy and deepen our understanding. This will provide a new benchmark as we focus on reducing emissions in key areas: transportation, food and beverages, and energy consumption.

PDWs AND CARBON EMISSIONS

High School Deputy Principal Louisa Radford led the development of a methodology to assess our PDWs, aligned with some other large international schools. This includes an assessment of the carbon emissions for each trip but also includes the educational impact in two areas, (a) Depth of Learning Experience and (b) Social and Environmental Impact.

- Long haul PDWs emit over 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person.
- Short haul PDWs with a direct flight, emit about 0.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person.
- Short haul PDWs with a stop-over emit about 0.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person.

Let's put this into context. The average person in Switzerland is responsible for about [4 tonnes of carbon emissions per year](#).

Our challenge is to balance what is essential with our goals of an international education and our responsibilities as citizens of our planet.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND NETWORKS

- [Compass Education Courses](#)
- [Make the Change](#)
- [SGIS Sustainability Collaborative Learning Group](#) (co-founded by ISZL)
- [ECIS Sustainability and Regenerative Practices Special Interest](#)
 - Zoe Badcock co-chairs the ECIS Special Interest Group on Sustainability. The first webinar can be viewed [here](#).

STUDENT AND STAFF ACTION IN SUSTAINABILITY

YFS Initiatives

The YFS team is preparing their second Parent Evening, showcasing updates on zero carbon, zero waste, aquaponics, and the Ghana PDW. The event will feature guest speakers and celebrate student achievements. Everyone is invited to join on **Wednesday, 15 January from 18:00–19:30 in the High School Theatre**.

EcoSchools Updates

- High School: The EcoSchools group meets every Wednesday lunchtime. After reviewing data from last school year, we've noted improvements thanks to the food truck. Now in the action phase, students are brainstorming new initiatives to pursue — stay tuned for snack tastings and fruit sales.
- Primary School: Grade 3 students are petitioning Snack Attack to stop using single-use plastics, while Grades 4 and 5 are gathering feedback on menu preferences to reduce food waste and writing letters encouraging less food pressure on students.

Environmental Projects

At the High School, a student is developing a mowing plan to protect wildflowers and installing bird boxes and insect hotels to support biodiversity.

Sustainable Clothes Swap at ISZL

Clothes Swaps at the Old School House are a fun and sustainable way to refresh your wardrobe while reducing waste and supporting ethical practices. Any leftover items in May will be donated to the refugee community attending ISZL's International Day Fair.

Next Clothes Swap:

- Thursday, 23 January, 15:45
- Friday, 24 January, all day
- Location: Old School House

Bring your offerings along on the day. Let's make a difference together!

SUSTAINABILITY HEROES

Always humble, Middle School Visual Arts Teacher Lowell Sipes is a quiet sustainability champion at ISZL.

Inspired by his experiences diving and witnessing ocean plastics and coral bleaching, Lowell has set a goal to make the Art classroom more sustainable and eliminate plastics. Through thoughtful changes — like reusing canvases with traditional gesso, opting for repairable, long-lasting tools, saving unused sketchbook paper, and replacing paints and materials with eco-friendly alternatives — he demonstrates sustainable practices.

Without preaching, Lowell inspires students to learn about sustainability alongside him, showing that small, meaningful steps can make a difference.



SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

What are the Rights of Nature? What does it mean to live with, from, or as nature? Do laws shape values, or do values shape laws? These are some of the thought-provoking questions ESS students explored via Zoom with [Carine Gibert](#), an environmental activist, educator, and sound artist based in New York.

Carine works with organisations advocating for the [Rights of Nature](#) and shared insights on indigenous knowledge, such as seven-generation thinking, granting legal rights to rivers, and integrating nature into constitutions. This session, part of the new IB Environmental Systems and Societies course, helps students broaden their understanding of global perspectives and values on environmental issues.

EY2 Vermi-Composting

As part of the Early Years garden project funded by the FFE, EY2 teachers participated in an online vermi-composting course by Wormup Academy, enhancing their skills in indoor and outdoor composting. Over the past six months, children have taken responsibility for collecting and preparing food waste for the compost, checking on the worms, and creating videos and books to share their learning with others.

The indoor wormery is currently cared for by the EY2 classes, and Wormup is providing additional German-language resources for schools, which we look forward to using.



Thank you for reading our newsletter and for supporting our initiative.
Keep you eyes peeled for future newsletters, events, and information.

We are always looking for contributions to this newsletter!
If you have ideas, please reach out to us.

Sincerely, The ISZL Sustainability Committee 2024-25
