



Green Team Guide: Strategies for Success

What is a Green Team?

A Green Team is a group of school community members who work together on education and action for sustainability. Green Team members may include students, teachers, custodians, administrators, and parent, family, or community volunteers.

Student Green Teams in schools participating in the King County Green Schools Program are eligible to receive guidance and recognition. Visit [Green Team assistance](#) for information about assistance, resources, and recognition for student teams. For more information about the program, visit www.kingcounty.gov/GreenSchools.

Strategies for success

Successful teams usually follow an ongoing three-step process of **recruit**, **sustain**, and **reward**.

Recruit

Recruit adults. Include a minimum of two school staff members, such as teachers, administrators, or custodians. Adult members serve as primary contacts for King County Green Schools Program support.

- It is helpful to include a member of the custodial staff. Custodians collect garbage, monitor heating systems, and are familiar with all parts of the building.
- Parent/guardian/family or community volunteers also can participate.

Recruit students. There is no such thing as too large a Green Team! Large teams may be divided into sub-groups focused on different conservation practices such as waste prevention, recycling, composting, energy conservation, water conservation, school garden, healthy schools, transportation, and more.

Below are strategies to increase student membership or participation.

- **Promote.** Use posters, fliers, and morning, lunch, and assembly announcements.
- **Ask an existing club to include Green Team activities.** Consider ASB, science, environmental, gardening, or community service clubs.

- **Consider designating a specific grade level as the Green Team.** Graduating students can orient or train incoming students a few months before the end of each school year.
- **Use a formal application process.** A student Green Team application form and pledge asks students to commit to serving on the team and communicates clear expectations about student participation. See sample Green Team application form on [this page](#).

Although a large Green Team can be helpful, keep in mind that, as Steve Jobs said, “A small team of A+ players can run circles around a giant team of B and C players.”

Sustain

Regular meetings and realistic activities are the best ways to sustain Green Team action and enthusiasm. Tips to maintain student motivation, team visibility, and continuity:

- Meet regularly (once per week or once every other week is recommended)
- Keep project goals achievable. For most schools, it works well to plan one small project, one activity, or one step toward a larger project per month.
- Share each success or project completion with the school community.
- Compile a list or calendar of team activities -- including a short description of the activity, who is involved, and when the activity occurs -- and share it with the school. This is helpful, especially when staff and student leaders change and when more than one team or class is involved.

Project or activity ideas

For a variety of project ideas, see the **Best Practices Guides** on these pages: [Waste Reduction and Recycling](#) / [Energy Conservation](#) / [Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention](#) / [Green Building](#) / [Healthy Schools](#) / [Litter Reduction](#) / [Transportation](#)

Daily projects

- Check classrooms to make sure lights are turned off in unoccupied rooms and that other energy conservation practices are routinely followed. Use the [energy conservation classroom checklist](#).
- Monitor lunch recycling and waste disposal stations.
 - When Green Team members monitor recycling and waste disposal stations during lunch, their fellow students learn how to properly sort materials.
 - Try to assign two student monitors to each recycling and waste station.
 - Rotate the monitoring responsibility between students, classes, or grade levels. Monitoring can be handled by a science or community service class, and can be used as a graded or bonus project for a class -- or for community service credit.
 - Create a short video to share with other students on how to sign up to monitor, what to do when monitoring, and how to get credit for the time.

Weekly or monthly projects

- Make announcements over the PA system, in the cafeteria, at assemblies, in newsletters, on bulletin boards, etc. about waste reduction, recycling, energy conservation, water conservation, and other conservation practices. Include facts about conservation practices - see [Waste Reduction and Recycling fast facts](#) / [Energy Conservation facts and tips](#) / [Water Conservation facts and tips](#).
- Promote waste free lunches.
 - For tips, visit [How to pack a waste free lunch](#).
 - Waste volume can be tracked by lunch period, class, or grade level to encourage positive competition to reduce lunch waste.
- Host a school supply swap day. See the [step by step guide](#).
- Check classrooms to make sure lights are turned off in unoccupied rooms and other energy conservation practices are followed. Use the [energy conservation classroom checklist](#).
- Identify contamination (*such as liquids, straws, and other materials not accepted in the school recycling program*) in recycling bins, and then create an announcement or other types of communication to educate students and staff about how to reduce waste and improve recycling.

Semi-annual or annual projects

- Improve your school's sustainability practices. See [Green Team project guides](#) for secondary schools and [project examples](#) for elementary schools. For a variety of project ideas, see the Best Practices Guides on these pages: [Waste Reduction and Recycling](#) / [Energy Conservation](#) / [Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention](#)
- Organize an Earth Day (or Earth Week) celebration. See [Earth Day Activity Guide](#).
- Assess waste, energy or water use, or modes of transportation to and from school.
 - Students can use science and math skills to determine how much waste is being generated by the whole school or in the cafeteria, and what percentage is sorted into recycling and food scrap bins. (Ask King County Green Schools Program for guidance.) Students can use communication skills to give kudos for correct sorting and reduced waste, and to guide their fellow students on how to improve.
 - Assess school energy or water conservation practices, with help from the program's Energy Conservation and Water Conservation Best Practices Guides.
 - Assess how students and staff are getting to and from school. Use the program's Transportation Best Practices Guide to help with the assessment.
 - Broadcast the assessment results or conclusions to the school community via the website, announcements, staff meetings, or newsletters.

King County school education and Green Team resources

- Elementary school [Green Team](#) resources
- Secondary School [Green Team](#) resources
- Remind teachers to sign up for King County's classroom workshops and other free educational programs: [Elementary school resources](#) / [Secondary school resources](#)

Sample Green Team meeting agendas

Meetings to build excitement and establish expectations

- You can use your first meeting to discuss student interests, ideas, and goals.
- Consider asking students to complete an application or pledge form to build commitment and communicate expectations. (See sample Green Team application form on [this page](#).)
- Teams may choose to brainstorm their own list of team norms, expectations, and goals.
- To build team identity, complete an activity such as selecting or creating a team name, logo, or slogan. This branding can be used in education and outreach.
- Develop a list of desired projects for the year, and decide which projects will be priorities.
- Create a calendar of team activities or projects, with the goal of completing one activity, a small project, or one step toward a larger project each month.

Meetings to build awareness and increase knowledgeable about waste reduction, recycling, energy and water conservation, or other conservation practices

- Create a skit or video to share information and inspire conservation behaviors.
- Train students by sorting items commonly found in school recycling, trash, and compostable material bins.
- Use items collected from school trash and recycling bins to make 3-dimensional posters (such as those shown to the right) to post above cafeteria garbage and recycling bins. Ask the Green Schools Program for information about what items can be recycled in your school.
- Create posters to educate and remind students and staff about why conservation practices matter and how to reduce waste, conserve energy, conserve water, and engage in other conservation practices.



Meetings to examine school waste

- Check with administrators, custodians, and teachers before completing this activity. Explain that students will examine school recycling and trash practices to monitor and encourage school-wide waste reduction and recycling.
- Ask student teams to complete a "scavenger hunt" in each classroom, office, and hallway. Scavenger questions may include the following.
 - How many recycling and garbage bins are in each room?
 - Where are they located? Is each garbage bin next to a recycling bin?
 - On or above each recycling bin, is there list of what materials are accepted for recycling? Note the number of recycling signs needed in each room.
 - What items are in each recycling and garbage bin? Did students and staff sort items correctly?
 - Does each classroom and office space have a reuse box for paper that's only used on one-side? If yes, where is it located?
 - Review scavenger hunt data to identify areas for improvement in school recycling and waste reduction practices.
 - Broadcast results and encourage every school community member to practice simple everyday actions to reduce waste, recycle, conserve energy and water, and other conservation practices.
 - Contact your Green Schools Program representative to request materials such as recycling signs or bins or energy and water conservation signs.

Meetings to plan an all-school recycling kick-off

- Plan a recycling kick-off event to educate students and staff about waste reduction and recycling and to promote any new or improved practices.
- For more guidance, refer to the [recycling kick-off event guide](#).

Meetings to plan a student-led staff meeting presentation

- Since staff members play a key role in ensuring long-term recycling success, educate staff on what can and can't be recycled at school. Having students plan and present at a staff meeting can empower students -- and staff listen!
- Establish roles for students. Practice the presentation so students feel comfortable.
- Refer to [How to present about Waste Reduction and Recycling](#) for ideas.

Meetings to make one-sided paper reuse trays to reduce school paper waste

- Make visually consistent G.O.O.S. (Good on One Side) paper reuse trays to place in classrooms, offices, and school library. Get permission from each teacher or office staff before placing a box in their space.
- Use empty printer paper box lids to make the G.O.O.S. boxes, and attach a visually consistent label or logo such as [this](#).

Reward

Celebrate successes as a team and as a school!

Green Team members work hard and deserve to be acknowledged for their efforts and successes. Positive reinforcement encourages members to stay on the team and draws others to join.

Teams that complete projects are eligible to receive recognition and prizes from the King County Green Schools Program.

- [Elementary school Green Team resources and recognition](#)
- [Secondary School Green Team resources and recognition](#)

Below are other types of rewards and celebrations.

- Recognize the team and its successes at a school assembly, a school staff meeting, and a school district board meeting.
- Recognize the team and its successes in a school or district newsletter, an online bulletin, a hallway bulletin board, or school website.
- Provide certificates of recognition. Find [printable templates online](#).
- Provide team members with additional recess or free time.
- Show a movie or plan a special activity of the team's choosing during lunch or after school.
- Have a party with fun and healthy snacks. To support the Green Team's mission, use durable plates, bowls, and utensils, and reduce food waste by offering appropriate quantities and planning what you will do with leftover snacks.

Recap: Successful School Green Teams

Your school can have an active student Green Team by:

- Regularly recruiting team members.
- Setting realistic goals.
- Sustaining the team with regular meetings and a variety of activities.
- Sharing with the school community the results of the team's activities and the school's conservation successes.
- Keeping a list or calendar of ongoing education and actions to help guide the team.
- Rewarding team members with praise and recognition.
- Receiving guidance from the King County Green Schools Program.

Ask for help from the King County Green Schools Program.

Email GreenSchools@kingcounty.gov, fill out [this form](#), or call program manager Dale Alekel at 206-477-5267.