



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

## Newcastle Elementary School

**School District:** Issaquah

**School Location:** Newcastle

**Began Participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
September 2009

**Level One of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in April 2010

**Level Two of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in May 2011

**Level Three of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in May 2012

**Sustaining Green School 2014-15:**  
Achieved in May 2015

**Sustaining Green School 2015-16:**  
Achieved in May 2016

**Sustaining Green School 2016-17:**  
Achieved in May 2017

**Sustaining Green School 2017-18:**  
Achieved in May 2018



Newcastle staff with Executive Constantine after accepting a King County Earth Hero at School award in April 2012.



Green Team students learn to sort garbage, recyclables and compostable materials to assist others in the cafeteria.

## Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Newcastle Elementary School maintained a recycling rate of 53 percent.
- In addition to a long-standing classroom and lunchroom recycling program, the school, with support from King County Green Schools Program and City of Issaquah, began a food scrap recycling program in November 2009.
- Several students took their Waste Watcher expertise to Amazon in 2011 to teach Amazon employees about reducing waste by recycling and composting. The students were featured in the [Newcastle News](#) (external).
- The school collaborated with TerraCycle to recycle Lunchables containers and Elmer's glue sticks and bottles.



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- In 2011-12, TerraCycle discontinued Ziploc bag and Capri-Sun drink pouch recycling at Newcastle, so staff encouraged students to use refillable, reusable drink and food storage containers to reduce trash and conserve resources.
- Stickers listing what can and can't be recycled were placed on all school recycling containers.
- Along with all schools in Issaquah School District, Newcastle replaced plastic-wrapped utensils with unwrapped utensils and has eliminated the use of straws.
- A student in each class was responsible for depositing classroom recyclable materials into designated recycling bins in the hall or lunchroom.
- To reduce paper use, the school switched from printed meeting minutes to emailing agendas and minutes, and school, PTSA, and class newsletters were sent out electronically and only printed for those that requested them.
- Recycling bins were placed in classrooms, offices, staff rooms, and lunchrooms and were all signed, color-coded, and paired with garbage cans.
- The King County Green Schools Program trained over 50 third- to fifth-grade student Waste Watchers to observe and assist at lunchroom recycling stations.
- School staff maintained the monitoring schedule, but if a student wanted to switch days or take a day off, it was the student's responsibility to find a replacement. This made scheduling easier for staff.
- The school promoted waste-free lunches and students assisted by making waste-free Wednesday posters.

## **Energy Conservation (Level Two)**

- In spring 2011, teachers and students posted signs throughout the school to remind people to turn off lights and shut down computers, monitors, and projectors when not in use.
- Natural light was used instead of electric lights when appropriate.
- Students in the after-school program performed a sweep at the end of each week to make sure all computers and monitors are shut off over the weekend.
- Staff members made sure blinds and windows are shut over the weekends and that thermostats are set as low as possible.



- The technology specialist checked all computers to make sure they have the correct and updated energy saving software and settings.
- The school communicated energy conservation tips and success stories with families and students through classroom newsletters, school newsletters and during weekly announcements in the school cafeteria.
- Students shared energy conservation tips with their families.
- Energy conservation stickers were placed by each school light switch.
- Computers were automatically shut-down each night around 6:00 p.m. using school district software.

## **Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention (Level Three)**

- Monthly Green School emails were distributed to all school staff with tips on how to conserve water and report leaks.
- Teachers shared tips on how to conserve water with their classes.
- A guest plumber taught the half-day kindergarten classes where their water comes from and how it gets to the tap.
- Announcements were made during school lunches and in the school-wide newsletter throughout the year to keep the school community informed about the school's water conservation efforts.
- Water conservation topics were built into annual student curriculum. Second-grade students learned about local wetlands and how they can prevent water pollution.
- A student patrol, made up of two classes, walked the school grounds inside and out throughout the school year looking for leaks or standing water and reported any problems to maintenance staff.
- Third-grade students studied the impact of local watersheds on salmon and marked storm drains in the City of Issaquah as a follow-up project.
- Fourth-grade students studied how water is cleaned, designed their own water filters after studying water issues in India, and visited the King County Brightwater treatment plant to learn how wastewater is treated.
- The school installed low-flow faucets, timers on restroom sinks, and a self-monitoring irrigation system whereby the district monitors and adjusts water use.



- One fourth-grade class used a science curriculum called River Xchange where students are assigned science pen pals in New Mexico. Students studied their local watershed, water quality testing, properties of water and how water is polluted. They also wrote related letters to their pen pals monthly.

## **Sustaining Green School recognition**

- Newcastle Elementary sustained its Level One waste reduction and recycling practices, Level Two energy conservation practices, and Level Three water conservation strategies.
- How the school built on its Level One through Level Three practices each year is described below.

## **Sustaining Green School 2014-15**

- The school participated in the city's waste-free lunch challenge in April 2015.
- The school moved its compostable Dixie-style cups from the start of the lunch line to a separate location farther away to encourage students to drink from the water fountain instead of from single-use cups. This simple act cut the school's cup use roughly in half.
- Fifth-grade students conducted a nutrition-based study comparing chocolate milk versus regular milk. They determined that chocolate milk is less healthy than regular milk, and that water is the best option of the three. As they promoted healthier choices, including drinking water and selecting regular milk over chocolate milk, students also encouraged fellow students to bring a reusable water bottle instead of single-use plastic water bottles.

## **Sustaining Green School 2015-16**

- Student Waste Watchers gave presentations in classrooms on what can be composted.
- The school partnered with Mountains to Sound Greenway, Newcastle's Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), Seattle's Sawdust Supply, and others to design and install a school garden using native drought-resistant plants.
- Fifth-grade students participated in planting and maintaining the school garden.



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## Sustaining Green School 2016-17

- Newcastle obtained a new bin for collection of compostable materials in the lunchroom.
- The staff lounge began collecting food scraps and compostable paper products. Pictures of what belongs in the containers were laminated and attached to each container.

## Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- The school lunchroom replaced all disposable utensils with reusable durable utensils.

## Awards

- The Waste Watcher program was honored at the City of Newcastle's 2012 Earth Day event, where over 40 students received certificates.
- In April 2012 Newcastle Elementary School's Waste Watcher program received a King County Earth Hero at School Award.

For more information about this school's conservation achievements and participation in the Green Schools Program, contact:

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