



## Rock Creek Elementary School

**School district:** Tahoma

**School location:** Maple Valley

**Began participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
September 2007

**Level One of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in December 2009

**Level Two of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in April 2012

**Level Three of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in May 2014

**Sustaining Green School:** Achieved in

- 2014-15
- 2015-16
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20



A Green Team student displays paper conservation sticker on paper towel dispensers

### Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Rock Creek Elementary has maintained a recycling rate of 61 percent.
- In spring 2011, students and staff began to collect compostable materials in the lunchroom. The compostable materials were sent to a regional composting facility.
- Recycling bins were added to the lunchroom for milk cartons, juice boxes, plastic bottles and aluminum cans.
- Students placed recycling stickers listing what can and can't be recycled on all recycling bins, and compost stickers on all classroom compost bins to educate the school community about what items can be composted.



- The school's garbage volume decreased by 54 cubic yards per month after classroom recycling was expanded and lunchroom collection of recyclable and compostable materials was initiated.
- The school hosted the King County Schools Going Green Together Assembly and follow-up workshops.
- In 2014-15, the school switched from disposable to durable and reusable utensils in the lunchroom.
- The school collected Capri Sun pouches and Lunchables separately in the lunchroom for TerraCycle, a company that uses those materials to make new products.
- "Kid Cops" were appointed in classrooms to survey garbage, recycling, and compostable materials bins.
- Green Team students created and shared PowerPoint presentations and signs to remind students and staff about the four R's – Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. To educate the school about composting, they performed the Compost Rap written by student Stacie Loftus.
- School administrators provided regular reminders to employees and students about reducing waste and recycling. Custodians Dave Oertel and Jim Saftich supported efforts to increase composting and recycling and helped monitor waste sorting.
- To reduce paper waste, the school sent parent newsletters electronically, and forms and district fliers were posted online.
- Announcements were made through the Rock Creek Network News. Teachers received announcements to share with their classes that focused on waste reduction and recycling. Reminders about proper recycling were also given during lunchtime to supplement the signs and stickers placed on bins.

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

- Green Team students created an energy pledge, made morning announcements with energy goals for the week, and visited classrooms to educate students about how to save energy.
- The school community was regularly reminded about energy conservation through classroom video announcements, signs, and PowerPoint presentations.
- "Turn Off Lights" and "Turn Off Equipment" signs and stickers were displayed near light switches and projectors to remind students and staff to turn them off when not in use.



- The Green Team delivered energy conservation checklists to each classroom so that teacher helpers could promote energy conservation practices.
- Most classrooms assigned teacher helpers to remind the teacher to turn off the projector, lights, and computers at the end of each day.
- To further reduce energy use, employees removed all personal appliances, including coffee pots and microwaves, in offices and classrooms.
- Custodians Oertel and Saftich helped Rock Creek to save energy by maintaining vents, following shut down procedures before vacations, and regularly maintaining the building's heating and cooling systems. Hot water and circulation pumps were turned off during extended school breaks.

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

- Green Team members created signs that were posted around the school to educate students and staff on the importance of water conservation.
- Turn off the Faucet stickers were placed in portables, classrooms, and bathrooms to remind students and staff to conserve water.
- Kid Cops expanded their role to include monitoring water conservation efforts.
- Water conservation facts were shared through classroom video announcements.
- Green Team members created a trivia game and video announcements to educate the school about water conservation best practices.
- In 2011-12, the school installed a rain barrel with the assistance of the Friends of the Cedar River Watershed and Tahoma School District.
- Third-grade curriculum focused on protecting streams and salmon in Puget Sound.
- Fifth-grade students maintained the school's rain garden as part of the conservation curriculum.
- To conserve water, staff members ran full loads in dishwashers and washing machines, and the head custodian installed aerators and motion sensors on all faucets.
- Students were encouraged to conserve water at home and received a charm for their conservation efforts.



## **Sustaining Green School recognition**

Rock Creek Elementary has been recognized as a Sustaining Green School for sustaining and building on its Level One waste reduction and recycling practices, Level Two energy conservation practices, and Level Three water conservation strategies. How the school did this each year is described below.

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

- To conserve energy, the school participated in the People, Power, Planet Program provided by McKinstry, the district's resource conservation management company. Students made sure classroom lights and electronic equipment were turned off at the end of each day and that blinds were closed. An energy conservation checklist was displayed in each classroom.
- The school made announcements reminding employees and students to turn off lights when not in use. Signs were posted reminding staff to turn off electronic equipment when not in use.
- Once each month, teachers received a video and accompanying lesson focused on energy conservation, waste reduction, or recycling to share in their classrooms.

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

- The school continued to participate in a People, Power, Planet Program to encourage energy conservation at the school. As part of that program, Rock Creek achieved four power points for classroom pledges to conserve energy. Pledges collected from 145 students and staff members were displayed in school hallways.
- Green Team students created a presentation on what can be recycled and composted, and then conducted a presentation for each classroom in the school.

### **Sustaining Green School 2016-17**

- The school continued to participate in People, Power, Planet Program (PPP) and took part in activities to reduce energy use at school. Students were sent home with waste reduction, recycling, and energy and water conservation facts and pledges. Along with their families, Rock Creek students committed to three conservation actions at home to reduce waste, conserve energy, and conserve water.
- The Green Team participated in the district's first student Sustainability Summit in March 2017. Students learned how to sort items into recycling, composting, and garbage bins. Students brainstormed new ways to help the school reduce waste, and each school team presented its ideas for sustainability practices.



- During Earth Week, the school held a waste competition to see which pod could produce the least amount of garbage. Green Team students measured the volume of garbage produced by each pod and then presented ideas about how they can properly recycle and reduce garbage.

## **Sustaining Green School 2017-18**

- The school began holding weekly waste-free Wednesdays where students were encouraged to limit disposable packaging and bring reusable food containers, utensils, and water bottles. To promote this program, Green Team members created and displayed signage around the school, made announcements, and created a waste-free Wednesday video.
- Each classroom elected a new sustainability representative to join the student council. Each representative formed subcommittees to work on different conservation projects throughout the school year.

## **Sustaining Green School 2018-19**

- Student Green Team members made posters that were displayed in classroom pods to promote waste reduction and recycling.
- Staff collected toner and printer cartridges for recycling.
- Green Team students participated in a Green School training, where they learned how to encourage the school community to reduce waste, recycle right, and conserve energy, and water.
- Students planned an Earth Day event and continued to encourage students and staff to take the People. Power. Planet pledge to protect the earth.
- Green Team students conducted Energy Zappers patrols to encourage energy conservation in classrooms. They made and displayed posters to share energy conservation facts and reminders.
- Staff members received energy conservation reminders before school breaks and expected snow days.
- Staff members monitored waste stations at Kindergarten lunches to help students sort recyclable and compostable materials correctly.
- To reduce food waste, the lunchroom maintained a food share table for students to leave or take unopened packaged items from the school lunch program.
- School staff members participated in a Building Operator tour conducted by McKinstry to learn about the school's energy and water conservation processes and systems.



- To reduce stormwater pollution, the school maintained two rain gardens and multiple bioswales on the school campus.

## **Sustaining Green School 2019-20**

- Green Team students conducted classroom energy audits to assess energy use and encourage energy conservation.
- Green Team students painted rocks with water conservation messages and placed them in the school's native plant and rain gardens.
- Green Team students created paper conservation stickers and displayed them on all paper towel dispensers as a reminder to reduce paper towel use because paper comes from trees.
- Students and staff members collected plastic bags and other types of plastic film to participate in the Trex Recycling Program. Rock Creek ranked fifth in the U.S. for most plastic film collected and recycled through the Trex program. Trex uses recycled plastic film to make products such as benches and decks.
- Green Team students created videos with tips for waste reduction, recycling, energy conservation, and water conservation. In April 2020, the videos were shared during all-school morning announcements and all teachers posted the videos on their classroom webpages.
- The school collected used markers to be recycled through the Crayola ColorCycle program.