



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Sunset Elementary School

School District: Issaquah

School Location: Bellevue

Began participating in the Green Schools Program: September 2010

Level One of the Green Schools Program: Achieved in May 2011

Level Two of the Green Schools Program: Achieved in January 2013

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

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 April 2018

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Sunset Elementary maintained a recycling rate of 43 percent through a school-wide program that included classroom, office, and lunchroom recycling.
- With help from City of Bellevue, in partnership with the King County Green Schools Program, the school launched a program to collect food scraps and other compostable materials in the lunchroom, classrooms and staff lounge.
- Over 60 student Waste Watchers monitored recycling, composting, and garbage collection stations to ensure proper recycling and waste disposal.
- The school further reduced lunchroom waste by establishing a share table for unopened packaged food from the lunch program, and staff lunchroom monitors recognized students who generated the least amount of waste during lunch.
- The school reduced the size of its garbage dumpster and increased the size of its compostable materials collection container.
- In 2010, the school's PTA received a grant to purchase reusable stainless steel water bottles for each of the school's 650 students.



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- Students collected Capri-Sun juice pouches in the lunchroom and sent them to TerraCycle, a company that uses the juice pouches to make a variety of products.
- Sunset Elementary School's student Green Team and a second-grade class created posters showing which materials should be recycled, composted and thrown away. The posters were distributed to classrooms and hung above color-coded waste bins throughout the school.
- The weekly school newsletter was sent to families electronically, saving 3,250 sheets of paper per week.
- A reuse box for paper used only on one side was set up. All staff and parent volunteers were asked to make double-sided instead of single-sided copies.
- Throughout the Issaquah School District, school's lunchrooms eliminated the use of straws and transitioned to using durable trays that could be washed and reused. When it was not possible to use durable trays, the lunchroom used compostable paper trays instead of disposable polystyrene trays.
- The school hosted the King County waste reduction and recycling assembly for first- through fifth-grade students.
- The Green Team received waste reduction and recycling training from the King County Green Schools Program and participated in outreach with other classmates.
- Throughout the year, the school shared information about its conservation policies in staff and PTA meetings, through newsletters, and at school-wide assemblies.
- Sunset promoted waste-free Wednesdays throughout the year.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Stickers were posted on all light switches to remind staff and students to turn lights off in unoccupied rooms or when they were not needed.
- Sunset Elementary reduced its energy use by 14.3 percent in 2011-12.
- All Sunset classes signed an Energy Conservation Pledge.
- Green Team members shared conservation tips at faculty meetings and via email. In 2017, emails were sent to teachers with tips to reduce energy consumption, including having student jobs to turn off lights when they leave the room.



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- Sunset started a weekly Green Honoree recognition for staff members who engaged in environmentally-friendly behaviors such as reducing waste and conserving energy.

Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention (Level Three)

- Green Team and Student Council members promoted water conservation actions through recorded “Green Tips” that were played during morning announcements.
- Sunset participated in the Fix a Leak Week where Green Team and Student Council members checked sinks and drinking fountains for leaks, and all students took home toilet leak check kits provided by Cascade Water Alliance.
- Multiple grade levels participated in watershed education assemblies provided by Cascade Water Alliance.
- Green Team and Student Council members posted signs on all sinks reminding students and teachers to soap hands with the faucet off, and then rinse.
- Water conservation signs are placed by every sink in classrooms.
- The school set thermostats between 68-70 degrees and used water controlled faucets (low pressure).

Sustaining Green School recognition

- To earn Sustaining Green School recognition, Sunset Elementary sustained and built on its Level One through Level Three conservation practices.
- How the school did this each year is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2014-15

- In April 2015, the school participated in a district-wide Zero Waste Cafeteria Challenge. In each classroom, student council members conducted presentations about waste-free lunches. Waste-free lunch tips were included in the school newsletter, in an email to all staff, and on student-designed posters.
- In May 2015, the Green Team began collecting compostable materials in five fourth-grade classrooms.



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Sustaining Green School 2015-16

- Staff and students promoted waste-free lunches in the school lunchroom.
- The head custodian arranged for the school's old risers to be recycled rather than thrown away.
- Fourth-grade classrooms piloted collecting classroom paper towels which would be collected along with food scraps and composted at the regional Cedar Grove Composting facility. The fourth-grade teachers saw a reduction in trash, generating less than one quarter of one trash can per class.

Sustaining Green School 2016-17

- The school's Green Team was trained by a King County Green Schools Program representative and continued to monitor recycling stations in the lunchroom year round.
- A waste-free lunch campaign featured reminders and promotions occurring throughout fall and spring.
- Teacher and Green Team advisor Michelle Larson attended district-wide Green Team meetings and shared successes and discussed obstacles.
- Michelle Larson presented about reducing school lamination use at a February 2017 staff meeting.
- Using grant funding, the school created an on-site garden involving students, parents, teachers, and the school's landscape supervisor.
- Teacher Usha Ganesh's class completed art work on terra cotta pots and then germinated herb seeds in them and planted them in the garden.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- The Green Team assisted with the school garden as docents and harvested produce which was donated to Issaquah Food Bank.
- Staff members promoted waste free lunches at school family night.



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

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