



West Mercer Elementary School

School district: Mercer Island

School location: Mercer Island

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
March 2010

Level One of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in November 2010

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

Level Three of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2015

Sustaining Green School: Achieved in

- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20



Student Green Team members wearing new Green Team monitor aprons



Teacher Stacy Sikora with student Green Team members

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- West Mercer Elementary School achieved recycling rate of 47 percent, then increased its recycling rate to 53 percent in 2018-19.
- The school hosted the King County “Our Planet, R Choices” assembly.
- Waste-free Wednesdays were encouraged and promoted regularly through weekly announcements.
- The student Green Team created a video aired on the school news channel demonstrating how to sort lunch waste properly.
- Signs were posted near copy machines and printers reminding staff members to reduce paper use and waste by using both sides of paper whenever possible.
- Each classroom received a bin for paper that had only been used on one side.
- The school recycled empty printer cartridges with Rapid Refill, a local buy-back program.



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- First-grade teacher Nancy Burrill collected bottle caps and used them to teach patterning and other math lessons.
- Before starting to reduce waste and recycling in its lunchroom, West Mercer sent approximately 680 pounds of lunchroom trash to the landfill each week. The school decreased its landfill contribution from lunch by almost 90 percent with about 70 pounds per week going to the landfill.
- In 2014, the Green Team educated students and staff about how much water goes into making plastic and the importance of recycling plastic bottles. Several classes competed to see which could collect the most plastic water bottles for recycling.
- In December 2018, a King County Green Schools Program representative attended a Green Team meeting and taught a lesson about sorting waste for recycling, composting, and disposal.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Students in all grade levels signed energy conservation pledges.
- Second-grade Green Team students created a *Kids First News* video report on how to conserve energy which aired during morning announcements.
- The Green Team delivered energy conservation checklists to all classrooms.
- Students and staff maintained a bulletin board showcasing energy conservation practices and the school's energy use.
- “No idle” signs were posted near the drop off/pick up area.
- Classes emphasized using only task lighting during writer's workshop periods.

Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention (Level Three)

- Water conservation tips were displayed on a student reader board and shared by the Green Team during morning announcements.
- The student Green Team assessed the water flow rate of all school bathroom faucets and determined that they were all at a low-flow rate that conserved water.
- Volunteers purchased and planted native and drought-tolerant plants which the Green Team identified with signs around the school campus.



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- The school held a courtyard clean-up event where students, parents, and teachers removed litter from the campus.
- For Earth Day, Green Team students designed a scavenger hunt for their peers that included native plant identification. Students in teacher Stacy Sikora's class added native plants on the hillside beside the school.
- Mercer Island School District recognized West Mercer for its native plant efforts: <http://www.mercerislandschools.org/Page/11705>.
- Outdoor watering was completed in early morning or evening, and sprinklers were regularly checked by facilities staff to ensure they watered the lawns, and not sidewalks, driveways, or gutters.
- The Healthy Ways to School Committee led the school's participation in the International Walk to School Day event in October 2010.
- To conserve water, the staff lounge dishwasher was only run on full loads.
- When repairs were needed for water fixtures, low-flow equipment was installed.

Sustaining Green School recognition

West Mercer Elementary sustained and built on 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 Three achievements each year is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- The Green Team set up labeled buckets to collect paper towels and other compostable materials in each classroom. Students worked with custodial staff to collect and empty the buckets daily.
- The school PTA worked with Green Team students to organize and promote a walk and bike to school day in March.

Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- The school participated in Crayola's ColorCycle program. The Green Team set containers for collection of used markers to send to Crayola to be recycled.

- The PTSA provided each classroom with sets of reusable party supplies. The Green Team worked with parent volunteers to reduce waste from classroom parties.
- The school held a walk or bike to school day to reduce carbon emissions.

Sustaining Green School 2019-20

- Teachers continued to educate students in their classrooms about correct sorting of recyclable materials and garbage. Students and teachers helped students sort items in the cafeteria.
- The school continued to use reusable trays and utensils in the cafeteria.
- Teachers continued to regularly remind students about water and energy conservation practices. In some classes, students were assigned turning off lights and equipment as a class job.
- Some grades included lessons on watersheds, water sources, and ecosystems.
- To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the student Green Team designed and shared a padlet – an online platform – with the school community. Teachers either emailed the activity padlet to students or posted it on Seesaw, a platform for student-driven digital portfolios and simple parent communications.
- The one-week Earth Day celebration took place at the end of May 2020. Each day during that week had a theme. Monday's theme was conservation at home and students used an Earth Day Bingo game to track and share what they did to conserve resources. Tuesday's theme was water conservation, Wednesday's theme was animal conservation, and Thursday's theme was Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. On Friday, students were encouraged to observe the world around them, specifically in their neighborhoods, and to take positive action to make a difference.