

Carl Sandburg Elementary / Discovery Community School

School District: Lake Washington

School Location: Kirkland

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
October 2007

Level One of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2009

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

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

Sustaining Green School recognition:

Achieved for

- 2014-15
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2021-22
- 2022-23

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- The school achieved a 72% recycling rate by educating students and staff about reducing waste and recycling, placing recycling bins in classrooms and cafeteria, using durable trays in the cafeteria, and collecting compostable materials in the cafeteria.
- The student Green Team, called The Earth's Helpers Club, created short videos to help educate the school about recycling and composting practices.



School bulletin board showing what can and can't be recycled



Earth Hero at School Award- Susan Vossler, parent volunteer, receives award in April 2011.



Bulletin board about Earth Week events



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- The Earth's Helpers Club conducted classroom recycling bin audits and shared recommendations about recycling practices based on the results.
- The school held a Waste-Free Wednesday competition to encourage students to reduce wasted food and to bring lunches from home in reusable containers. Students measured garbage, recyclables, and compostables to track progress.
- The school hosted the King County elementary school assembly program and classroom workshops about reducing waste and recycling.
- Recycling bins were set out at all school events such as the carnival.
- Students and family volunteers placed recycling stickers from the Green Schools Program on all recycling bins. Signs were placed on photocopy machines to promote double-sided photocopying.
- Family volunteers helped monitor lunchroom sorting stations to ensure correct sorting of garbage, recyclables, and compostables.
- Students and volunteers created a bulletin board showing what materials can be recycled and composted, and conducted classroom presentations about why recycling and composting matter, what can be recycled and composted, and ways to reduce waste at lunch. Students created signs about reducing waste and recycling for display in the lunchroom and throughout the school.
- To encourage waste reduction and recycling practices, articles were included in PTA newsletters, presentations were made at PTA and staff meetings, and Green Tips were placed in the monthly school newsletter.
- The school newspaper was sent by email, saving one ream of paper per week.
- A Department of Ecology award and PTSA funding helped buy environmentally themed books for the library and reusable serving-ware for classroom parties.
- In 2012 the Earth's Helpers Club sponsored an electronic recycling event.
- During Earth Week, the student council led a schoolwide litter clean-up.
- The school collected energy bar wrappers for recycling through TerraCycle, a company that used the collected materials to make new products.



Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The school was recognized by the district for decreasing energy use by 25%, thanks to energy conservation education and a variety of conservation strategies.
- The Earth’s Helpers Club signed an energy conservation pledge and placed stickers on all light switches to encourage turning off lights in unoccupied rooms.
- In classroom and staff meeting presentations, newsletters, bulletin boards, and signs, the Club promoted energy conservation actions.
- The district resource conservation manager installed energy-saving devices such as vending misers, compact fluorescent bulbs, and occupancy sensors.
- In 2012 the school moved into a new energy-efficient building featuring solar panels, geothermal energy for heating, low-energy water heaters and light fixtures, occupancy sensors, and energy-saving concrete wall insulation. The Earth’s Helpers Club created a Power Point to educate students about the green features.
- Guest speakers from Puget Sound Energy and other organizations provided presentations on energy conservation and energy use impacts on salmon.
- Doors to classrooms were kept closed to maintain heat.
- In 2010, the school established a “no-idle zone” in its parking lot to encourage vehicle drivers to turn off their engines while waiting.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- The Earth Helper’s Club educated the school about conserving water, and invited students to sign a pledge to report leaks and use water wisely.
- The new facility’s outdoor landscaping included native plants and a rain garden. Family volunteers weeded sections of the school grounds. In 2013-14, the school remained the district’s only herbicide-free school.
- Second-grade students learned about the water cycle, where their drinking water comes from, and why conserving water matters. Several students shared what they learned in morning PA announcements.



Educational display about water conservation practices



- Guest speakers from environmental education group Nature Vision educated students on water conservation and healthy watersheds.
- Water conservation tips were shared in the school's newsletter.
- The school participated in Fix a Leak Week where classrooms checked sinks and drinking fountains for leaks.
- Student and family volunteers started a service-learning opportunity with the non-profit H2O for Life to educate the school about global water issues and to raise funds for schools around the world with limited access to clean water.
- Family volunteers created a bulletin board about water conservation and invited students to contribute to a penny drive to raise funds for the school's H2O for Life sister school in Uganda.
- During lunch, to educate students about the importance of access to clean drinking water, family volunteers demonstrated how water purification systems work.

Sustaining Green School recognition

The school sustained and built on its Level One through Level Three practices. How the school did this each year is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2014-15

- The student Green Team researched and promoted the use of alternatives to polystyrene serving-ware (also known as Styrofoam) in the cafeteria.
- On Earth Day, students participated in a Litter Safari to collect and dispose of litter.
- In March 2015, the school campus was certified as a National Wildlife Federation wildlife habitat.

Sustaining Green School 2016-17

- Water purification system demonstrations took place during school lunches to educate students about the importance of accessing clean drinking water.
- The school shared announcements in school and PTSA newsletters about at-home water conservation practices. Students completed a take-home water conservation pledge to conserve water at home, at school, and in their community.



Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- The school renewed its commitment to maintain an herbicide free environment with monthly volunteer work parties to weed, plant, and fertilize school grounds.
- To prevent water pollution downstream, students volunteered for monthly litter cleanups and rain garden maintenance.
- The school music teacher worked with second-grade students to plan a musical performance called Assignment: EARTH during Earth week.

Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- In spring 2019, the school participated in a pilot Food Share/Donation Program where students placed unopened, packaged items from the school lunch program in a food share bin for other students to take. Leftover items were donated to a nonprofit food distribution organization. Each day, students recorded quantities donated and moved leftover foods into a refrigerator.
- To maintain an herbicide-free school, the Green Team weeded the school garden and outdoor commons area.
- The Green Team helped set up an outdoor Peaceful Patio, a calm space for students needing an alternative place to spend recess.

Sustaining Green School 2021-22

- With leadership from associate principal Nami Kusunose, teacher and Green Team advisor Laura Schneider, and family volunteers Amanda Stucky and Mike Weakland, the Green Team helped the school sustain and expand its waste reduction, recycling, and other conservation practices.
- The cafeteria re-started collection of recyclable and compostable materials, and classrooms and offices continued to collect recyclable materials.
- Administrators and family volunteers presented at lunch about sorting recyclables, compostables, and garbage, and monitored sorting stations to help students sort.
- Ms. Schneider's first-grade class and Ms. Staples fourth-grade class helped compost and recycle expired emergency snacks. To compost the food, students removed the plastic wraps, and also placed the cardboard boxes in recycling bins.



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- Students learned about the benefits of composting and how to sort food scraps and other compostable materials at school and home.
- Students were encouraged to reduce wasted food, use durable water bottles, and bring lunches from home in reusable containers.
- To conserve paper, classrooms were provided with trays for paper printed only on one side, so blank sides could be used for notes. Instead of single-use disposable wipes, reusable cloths were used for cleaning.
- The school participated in the King County virtual field trip to learn about the importance of reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting waste.
- Volunteers maintained the school's rain garden which filters pollutants from runoff and provides wildlife with food and shelter. The volunteers planted native plants.

Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- Led by teacher Laura Schneider, the 24-member Green Team of fourth- and fifth-grade students filled out an team application by answering two questions: Why do you want to be a member of the Green Team?, and what would make you an outstanding member?
- Green Team students visited each classroom to teach students how to sort recyclable and compostable materials, and why it matters.
- At the start of the school year, in the lunchroom, parent volunteer Amanda Stuckey taught students how to sort recyclables, compostables, and garbage, and encouraged them to take food home which they did not finish.
- The Green Team gathered donations to buy small food scrap bins and compostable bag liners for classrooms to use at snack time, and presented to each class why recycling and composting matter and what materials can be placed in each bin. The team emptied classroom compost bins into lunchroom compost bins.
- Nature Vision and King County provided classroom workshops. All first-grade classes learned about reducing and reusing, including how to pack a lunch from home with reusable containers.



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- Green Team students worked in the school's pollinator garden to weed, trim, and plant. Team members learned about the importance of pollinators in our environment. The school continued to use water collected in rain barrels to irrigate its pollinator garden. The school's sandy field and native plants did not require watering. Herbicide-free weeding events continued in 2022-23.

Awards

- The school won district recognition for decreasing energy use by 25 percent.
- Parent volunteer Susan Vossler received a King County Earth Heroes at School Award in 2011.
- The Earth's Helpers Club received a King County Earth Heroes at School Award in 2013.
- The school received a Seed Award from the Washington Department of Ecology.
- The school received a Green School Leader award for Reducing Environmental Impact and Costs (Pillar 1 of the U.S. Green Ribbon School awards) in 2014 from Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- In spring 2019, the school received the Washington State Green School Leader award in Pillar 3 – Environmental and Sustainability Education.