



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

## Crestwood Elementary School

**School district:** Kent

**School location:** Covington

**Started participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
2002–2003; then rejoined in 2010

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

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

**Level Three of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in May 2013

**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

**Sustaining Green School 2019-20:**  
Achieved in May 2020

### Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- The school maintained a recycling rate of 53%.
- To reduce paper use, menus and custodial work orders were placed online, smart boards were placed in classrooms, lunch rosters were printed on the backside of used paper, and parents were given the opportunity to receive electronic newsletters.
- The school discontinued use of lunchroom trays.
- Students collected 3,500 milk cartons each month to be recycled.



**Food Waste Composting**  
A student adds coffee grounds to the compost bin



Crestwood Elementary receives the King County Earth Hero at School award in 2003



- Defenders of the Planet, the student environmental club, made presentations about recycling to all classes, and emptied classroom recycling bins daily.
- The Green Schools Program presented at lunches on why waste reduction, recycling, and composting are important.
- Staff members coordinated taking the school's scrap metal to a scrap yard. The scrap metal included shelving, magazine racks, pieces of pipe, and discarded table and chair legs that would otherwise end up in the garbage.
- Student volunteers and staff turned food scraps into compost in an Earth Tub, a composting system students call "bEARTHa." Read [Feeding "The Big Pig" and saving the planet](#) (external) from the Feb. 3, 2007 edition of *The Seattle Times* to learn about Crestwood's experiences with the first Earth Tub system in a King County school. The bEARTHa Club weighed compostable materials after lunches.
- In 2012-13, Crestwood set up an on-site greenhouse and compost from bEARTHa was used as mulch in the greenhouse and in flowerbeds.
- Education about waste reduction and recycling was conducted regularly in the lunchroom and at assemblies, with leadership from head custodian Carol Talmadge, cook Judi Sperle, and teacher Bette Mansfield.
- Totes were placed in classrooms to collect paper used on one side for reuse.



The bEARTHa team in front of the school's Earth Tub after dumping the day's food scraps

## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The Crestwood Green Team placed energy conservation labels near all light switches and electrical equipment in the school to remind students and employees to turn them off when not in use.
- In 2013, bEARTHa members created posters reminding staff and students to turn off lights and electronic equipment.
- Ninety-five volunteer student monitors pulled window blinds and turned off lights, computer monitors, printers, TVs and VCRs at the end of each day.



- The school created energy conservation pledges signed by students, teachers, and custodians.
- During the winter months, students and staff were encouraged to dress appropriately for the season rather than adjust the thermostat.
- The school's lighting system was upgraded in 2010 with energy efficient lighting.
- The night custodian made sure all TV's, Smart Boards, computer monitors and classroom lights were shut off at the end of each day.
- In 2012-13, Crestwood purchased an energy-saving washing machine and used it to wash full loads of towels.

## Water Conservation (Level Three)

- In 2003, Crestwood achieved a 60% reduction in water consumption.
- Hand-washing rhymes to encourage water conservation were tested by Defenders of the Planet club members and then shared with the school. Kindergarten students recited, "One Two Three That's Enough For Me" when they are washing their hands.
- Sixth-grade students researched watersheds and how their water is processed.
- Student author Anne Livingood had her watershed report published in the *Covington-Black Diamond-Maple Valley Reporter*.
- Students in the bEARTHa club created posters asking students and staff to conserve water and report leaky faucets. The posters were placed near all classroom and restroom sinks.
- Custodian Carol Talmadge routinely checked for leaky faucets and reported problems immediately for maintenance.
- Students assisted head custodian Talmadge to educate students and staff about why they should never dump wastewater and chemicals into streams or storm drains. Talmadge worked with four kindergarten classes to paint a fish symbol near a storm drain to remind people not to dump wastewater.
- During 2003-2004, a 90-gallon water barrel was installed to collect rainwater for use in the student gardens, flower beds, and greenhouse.
- The school's butterfly garden included plants that require little water.



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- Retired teacher Jan Simmons raised salmon from eggs in a large aquarium located in the school library. Simmons tested local streams for pH levels and other indicators of a healthy watershed. She and the students released salmon fry in nearby Little Soos Creek.
- Custodians installed motion-sensors on all faucets to help conserve water.
- Crestwood installed low-flow toilets and no-water urinals which saved 230 cubic feet of water, or more than 172,040 gallons, and approximately \$1,600 in water costs over a seven-month period.
- The Kent School District custodial department started a new water-saving process for cleaning and sanitizing restrooms.

## **Sustaining Green School recognition**

The school 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 did this each year is described below.

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

- Crestwood Recyclers, with guidance from sixth-grade teacher Bette Mansfield, collected recyclable materials throughout the building twice per week. As they collected materials, Crestwood Recyclers looked for and corrected contamination.
- To celebrate Earth Day, students invited their families to eat lunch with them at school and to showcase the school's recycling and composting program.
- Crestwood Recyclers made regular announcements to update the rest of the student body on recycling practices.
- Students working on bEARTHa presented to lunch groups to remind them to sort food scraps and showed students what can be composted and recycled.
- After discussing at-home composting with students, Crestwood sent fliers home to introduce composting and provide resources to help families get started.



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

- When members of the recycling club collected recyclable materials from classrooms, they reminded teachers to turn off lights and conserve water.
- A new group of students started working with bEARTHa. The older students trained new students and helped them track which lunch periods disposed of what types of foods and materials. They planned to use the data to help the school reduce waste.
- Crestwood scheduled a parent lunch near Earth Day in April to increase family involvement in reducing waste at school.

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

Green Team members researched local and global endangered animals and made posters explaining why each animal is endangered and how each person can help them. The students presented their research to students and with parents in the school newsletter.

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

- Garden Club students conserved water by using rain collected in rain barrels to irrigate the school garden. They first researched how rain barrels worked and used 55-gallon emergency water barrels to collect rain water.
- Solar-powered LED lights were installed in the greenhouse and only used when there was not enough natural light.

## **Awards**

- Crestwood received a King County Earth Hero at School award in 2003.