



Ella Baker Elementary School

School district: Lake Washington

School location: Redmond

Began participating in Green Schools Program: February 2019

Level One of the Green Schools Program:

Achieved in May 2019

Level Two of the Green Schools Program:

Achieved in June 2020

Level Three of the Green Schools Program:

Achieved in June 2023

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- The school achieved a recycling rate of 50%, thanks to waste prevention, reuse, and recycling practices.
- The cafeteria switched from disposable trays and utensils to reusable, washable trays and utensils.
- Student and parent volunteers were trained to monitor the lunchroom sorting station.
- To encourage waste reduction and recycling practices, the school shared announcements over the PA system and in the school newsletter.
- All classes included lessons about environmental sustainability in their curriculum, and fourth- and fifth-grade classes completed projects about food systems and reducing wasted food. The school hosted King County's assembly about reducing waste and recycling.
- Students created presentations on how waste can impact orcas and salmon.



Cafeteria sorting station.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- In 2019-20, while learning about energy conservation, Ella Baker expanded its waste reduction and recycling practices by collecting food scraps and other compostable materials in the lunchroom. Green Team students made signs



showing what materials should be placed in each bin, including a leftover liquids bin, a recycling bin, an organics bin for food scraps and other compostable materials, and a garbage bin. Green Team members monitored sorting stations to help fellow students sort correctly. The PTSA bought compostable bag liners approved by Cedar Grove Composting, the regional composting facility.

- In an October 2019 PTSA meeting, the Green Team shared information about waste reduction practices. During the cultural night in February 2020, the sustainability team worked with the cultural committee to reduce event-related waste, and Green Team members helped with sorting at the event.
- To help conserve energy, Green Team students:
 - Placed “Turn off the lights” stickers near manual light switches and distributed “Turn off equipment” signs to staff to display near classroom and office monitors.
 - Adapted a classroom Energy Conservation Pledge from the Green Schools Program, and invited all students to sign the pledge.
 - Researched and shared with students and staff how to reduce energy used by electronics.
- A PTSA member presented to students and staff about how to conserve energy.
- Staff were asked to follow district policy prohibiting personal appliances such as refrigerators, coffee pots, and heaters, to turn off smart boards, projectors, and document cameras when not in use, and to make sure electronic devices were on energy efficient modes.
- To reduce energy use, after-school activities were consolidated in the lunchroom, gym, or STEM Lab.
- Computers automatically were shut down through software, and printers were programmed to enter sleep mode when not in use.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- In 2022-23, while sustaining and expanding waste reduction, recycling, and energy conservation practices, the school learned how to conserve water.



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- To maintain and improve waste reduction and recycling practices:
 - Recycling bins continued to be used in classrooms, offices, and cafeteria.
 - In March 2023, led by PTSA Sustainability and Emergency-Preparation Chairs, the Green Team helped unwrap 1,900 expired emergency food bars to add to the composting collection bin instead of being landfilled.
 - Students were encouraged to refill durable water bottles and to reduce wasted food ("take what you want and eat what you take").
 - The fifth-grade hosted a book exchange, and used "bring a loved book, take a 'new to you' book" to promote the event.
 - PTSA asked families to bring their own mugs or cups to events.
 - In fall 2022, a food share bin was set up at lunch unopened, packaged foods, and students were invited to take share table items. The Green Team helped monitor the share table to make sure only packaged items from the school lunch program were placed on the table.
 - In a separate bin next to the food share bin, students placed uneaten apples and other whole fruit with edible skins, and family volunteers donated the fruit to Redmond Hopelink.
 - At the start of the school year, Green Team members watched a Cedar Grove Composting video about the composting process and made announcements at lunch about how to sort materials.
 - Team members were trained as Compost Captains to help fellow students decide what materials to place in compost bins. When students accidentally placed wrongs item in a bin, the Compost Captain invited them to "try again!" Each week, for pick up by Cedar Grove Composting, the school filled four 96-gallon containers with food scraps, napkins, and other compostable materials.

- Crystal Fewtrell, Green Team advisor and instructional assistant, guided the 41-member Green Team in 2022-23, with support from principal Kim Bilanko, secretary Renata King, PTSA Presidents Nirali and Raj, and custodians Arsen Tugen and Ms. Kim.



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- All second- through fifth-grade students were invited in morning announcements and the newsletter to fill out an application to join the team. Each member, their teacher, and their parent/guardian signed an agreement committing to two meetings per month during morning recess, and to support waste reduction and water conservation activities.

- Water conservation education included:
 - Green Team members created a presentation about conserving water and reducing water pollution which they presented at lunch in April 2023.
 - Nature Vision classroom workshops, where kindergarten students learned about the life cycle of a water droplet and the water cycle, and how soil and water are important in our environment.
 - Fourth-grade lessons about extreme flooding and droughts caused by climate change, the impact of climate change on food systems, and how to maintain a hydroponics vertical farming system.
 - Fifth-grade students, led by the district resource conservation manager, used water flow bags from the Green Schools Program to test how many gallons of water per minute flowed from school faucets. Students were asked to look for and report leaking faucets. The students wrote letters requesting a rain barrel, which was provided by the district and Seattle Tilth in late Spring 2023, to collect rain to irrigate school gardens.

- School water conservation practices included:
 - Dishwashers used steam to reduce the water needed to wash dishes.
 - Restrooms had low-flow toilets and faucets with motion sensors.
 - Native plants on school grounds reduced irrigation needs.