



## Glacier Park Elementary School

**School district:** Tahoma

**School location:** Maple Valley

**Began participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
February 2007

**Level One of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in June 2009

**Level Two of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in June 2010

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

**Sustaining Green School:** Achieved in

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

### A leader in the district

Glacier Park was the first school in Tahoma School District to participate in the Green Schools Program. Its efforts and achievements inspired the district and all district schools to participate in the program and improve their conservation practices.



Using recyclable plastic bottles, students created hallway art to promote recycling at the school.



Compost days at Glacier Park.



Green Team bulletin board



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# Success Story

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## Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Glacier Park achieved and maintained a recycling rate of 65%. The 900-student school diverted more than 600 cubic yards of solid waste annually.
- Lunchroom garbage volume was reduced by 80%, from 80 bags per week to 16.
- In 2008-09, the school began to collect lunchroom food scraps and food-soiled paper for composting, and to collect empty cartons and bottles for recycling.
- In 2013-14, the lunchroom began using durable utensils.
- The school held several book exchange events to encourage textbook reuse.
- The student Green Team created recycling posters, monitored the new lunchroom recycling containers, and visited classrooms to promote recycling practices.
- Recycling containers were added to the lunchroom for milk cartons, juice boxes, plastic bottles and aluminum cans. Staff placed recycling stickers listing what can and can't be recycled on all recycling containers.
- Teachers organized regular litter pickups.
- The student Green Team organized a Waste-Free Lunch Challenge after watching a presentation on why and how students should pack a lunch with durable, reusable containers. Informational displays were set up to encourage participation. A grade level competition was held weekly after the kickoff to continue momentum.
- Students created art using materials such as bottle caps, and the school held an exposition of student work.



Students helping in the school's garden.



Student poster contrasts a wasteful lunch with a waste-free lunch.



Students reading in school garden.



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- All materials in the school garden were made of recyclable or reusable items such as dryer drums used as plant pots and milk jugs used to grow lettuce.
- The school collected electronics and printer cartridges through Cartridges for Kids which provided an economic incentive to schools to collect and mail in those items to be recycled.
- On a monthly basis, Green Team students and staff trained students on waste sorting methods to ensure all waste and recycling bins were color-coded with signs showing what should be placed in each bin.

## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The school purchased a Kill a Watt meter to track energy usage, and teachers were encouraged to use it in classrooms with students.
- All staff were asked to restrict use of personal heaters, refrigerators and other appliances in offices and classrooms.
- Students made “The Power is in Your Hands... to turn out the lights” signs and placed them over every light switch.
- The school upgraded thermostats in some classrooms and installed light sensors in restrooms.
- The Green Team created a board to display energy savings.
- The principal started an energy patrol where students monitored classrooms for energy use practices during lunch and provided reminders about conservation.
- On longer school breaks, heating and cooling units in portables were turned off to save energy, and teachers unplugged classroom computer carts.
- Custodians used non-toxic cleaning products which can be used in cold water instead of hot water to save energy.



Many Glacier Park students bring lunches in reusable containers.



Energy conservation information from People, Power, Planet program.



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- Green Team members encouraged students to take the People, Power, Planet energy conservation pledge and displayed energy conservation information.
- The school's Green Team organized a "Walk, Bike or Bus to School" month to increase awareness and promote responsible stewardship.
- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and raise awareness about climate change, the principal organized district buses to bring families to school events.
- The school asked bus drivers to shut off their ignitions rather than idling while waiting for students.
- A walk-to-school campaign persuaded many students to walk to school.
- Custodial staff regularly reminded teachers to use only half of the light switches in their classrooms by marking unnecessary light switches.

## **Water Conservation (Level Three)**

- Students shared water conservation facts and reminders over the intercom system during morning announcements.
- Posters were placed on restroom mirrors to remind students and staff to turn off the water when washing their hands.
- The school started a policy to report leaks and other water-related issues to the custodian as high priority work orders.
- Custodians maintained and replaced aerators on faucets as needed.
- The school committed to replacing conventional faucets with metered faucets at the end of their useful life.
- The Green Team and garden club set up two water barrels on the portable buildings closest to the garden. The school installed a cistern to collect rainwater. The collected water was used to water the school vegetable garden.
- The student Green Team made posters about positive actions students can take to reduce their carbon footprints.
- First-grade students explored the marine life community, and set goals to preserve and protect marine environments. Second-grade students learned about endangered species, and compared temperate forests and rainforests.



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- Third-grade students explored interconnections between land and water, learned about cause and effect in real world situations, and studied salmon in the context of their local community. Fourth-grade students explored the natural environment, geography and economics of Washington State and learned how to take a stand on natural resource issues. Fifth-grade students learned how to use a microscope and make comparisons between larger organisms and systems.
- Students learned about composting, planting, harvesting and worms in the school garden. The produce students grew was donated to a local food bank.

## **Sustaining Green School recognition**

Glacier Park Elementary sustained and built on its Level One waste reduction and recycling practices, Level Two energy conservation practices, and Level Three water conservation practices. How the school did this is described below.

## **Sustaining Green School 2014-15**

- In 2014-15, the school participated in McKinstry's People, Power, Planet Program. The school conducted classroom energy audits, created a Save the Earth poster contest, and made announcements about waste reduction, recycling and energy conservation.
- Teacher Cathy Haws and the student Green Team conducted Power Patrols to make sure classrooms were following energy conservation procedures, and they sent reminders to staff when improvements were needed.
- The school purchased and installed a greenhouse with funds raised through TerraCycle, a company that purchases Capri-Sun juice pouches collected by schools and uses them to make new products.
- In 2015, Glacier Park Elementary participated in Compost Days, a regional partnership between King County, Cedar Grove Composting, and Waste Management. Participating schools engaged students in learning about composting, and received free compost for their school gardens.



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

- The school's Green Team created and posted 3-dimensional signs of with actual waste and recyclable items above lunchroom recycling and waste stations to remind students what can and cannot be recycled and collected for composting.
- Classroom announcements helped students and staff remember to turn off the lights and think about energy and water conservation.
- Green Team students participated in the district's first student Sustainability Summit in March 2017. Students learned how to sort items and brainstormed ways to help their school send less garbage to the landfill.

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

To reduce food waste and waste from disposable packaging, the school started a waste-free lunch campaign where waste-free lunches were provided by the school and students were encouraged to bring a waste-free lunch. The Green Team created a display showing examples of wasteful and waste-free lunch items.

## **Sustaining Green School 2018-19**

- Students were encouraged to join the Green Team and to serve as environmental leaders in their school community.
- Fifth-grade students learned about waste reduction and recycling practices in a training presented by the King County Green Schools Program.
- In the lunchroom, the school used durable trays and bulk water and condiment dispensers.
- To reduce food waste, the school set up a share table in the lunchroom for students to take or leave unopened milk and packaged foods.
- The school updated lunchroom and classroom recycling signs to help students and staff to correctly sort waste.
- A contamination reduction competition was held to encourage students to recycle right and reduce contamination.



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- Green Team students conducted classroom waste audits to identify common sorting errors. The students created a PowerPoint presentation on reducing contamination in recycling bins and shared it with staff and students.
- Fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms collected compostable materials in classrooms, and the materials collected were added to lunchroom food scrap bins for transport to a regional composting facility.
- Custodial and administrative staff regularly reminded staff to use daylight and encouraged teachers to unplug appliances and computer carts before long weekends and school breaks.
- Water filling stations were used to limit water waste from traditional water fountains and to encourage students to use their own reusable water bottles.
- Third- and fifth-grade students studied the water cycle and the importance of conserving natural water resources.
- Overactive faucet motion sensors were adjusted to limit water waste.

## **Sustaining Green School 2022-23**

- The Green Team of 11 students in third-fifth grades grade met weekly as a Zero Hour class. The team was advertised in a school newsletter.
- Green Team students visited classrooms throughout the school to talk about how to sort recyclable and compostable materials, and to make sure students and staff sort correctly. Recycling bins in each classroom had signs on lids to remind students and staff that only empty bottles, cans, and cartons are accepted for recycling.
- Classes continued to eat lunch in classrooms, and all classes watched a video about how to sort recyclable materials. To reduce garbage volumes, the school sent families information about sending their students with "pack-in and pack-out" from home.
- The school began to collect used batteries to bring to a local hardware store for proper disposal.



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- For energy reduction, the classrooms have posters to remind people to turn off lights or not turn on ALL lights, and instead use daylight when possible. Most classrooms had sensors to turn off lights when there is no movement detected.
- Restroom faucets automatically turn off to reduce water flow.
- The school's garden was revived after COVID, starting with bulb planting and weeding.

## Awards

- Connie Jo Erickson, head custodian, and Cathy Haws, teacher, each received a King County Earth Heroes at School award in 2010.
- The Glacier Park Green Team received a King County Earth Heroes at School award in 2008.
- Glacier Park received a greenhouse and \$1,000 from the Washington State Potato Commission.
- In 2012, the school received the Washington State Green School Leader award in Pillar III - Environmental and Sustainability Education.
- In 2013, Glacier Park Elementary School won the U.S. Green Ribbon School award for excellent in three pillars - Pillar 1 (environmental impact including waste reduction, recycling, and energy and water efficiency; Pillar 2 (healthy school environment); and Pillar 3 (environmental and sustainability education).