



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Gregory Heights Elementary School

School district: Highline

School location: Burien

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:

December 2008

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

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

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- The school increased its recycling rate from 23% to 38%.
- Efforts included educating students about recycling, reducing lunchtime garbage, and launching milk carton recycling at breakfast and lunch.
- The Gregory Heights Student Leadership Team (SLT) gave classroom presentations on recycling, conducted classroom waste audits, made posters about recycling, and purchased a worm bin to begin composting food scraps.
- Recycling bins provided by the Green Schools Program were placed in the lunchroom for milk cartons, juice boxes, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans.
- School staff placed recycling stickers from the Green Schools Program on classroom and lunchroom recycling bins to show what can be recycled.
- Students decorated bulletin boards with recycling information, the PTSA purchased recycling bins, student leaders and lunch assistants guided students on how to sort materials correctly, and a recycling ethic pervaded the entire school.
- The school promoted a “waste free lunch” day in which students and staff were encouraged to reduce their lunchtime garbage by eating the food they take or bring



Student leadership team members at Gregory Heights Elementary.



Students help with milk carton recycling.



and packing lunches from home in reusable container. Students and staff noticed that garbage bins were significantly less full on the waste free lunch day.

- Students participated in a “zero waste” cubby clean out at the end of the year. Unwanted materials that would have been disposed in past years were reused or recycled.
- The SLT was responsible emptied recycling bins in specialist, kindergarten, and pre-school classrooms.
- Paper reuse bins were made for every classroom. The school conducted a campaign to promote the reuse bins and double-sided copying.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The Student Leadership Team (SLT) formed an energy conservation patrol which reminded the school community to turn off lights and electronic equipment and to use daylight instead of electric lights whenever possible. The office administrator sent periodic e-mail reminders to teachers about energy conservation.
- Student-made signs were posted on all light switches to encourage staff and students to turn off lights in unoccupied spaces. Posters were made to encourage turning off computer monitors and other electronic equipment when not in use.
- The school held an assembly provided by Seattle City Light (SCL) for third- through sixth-grade students about energy conservation and carbon footprints. Three fifth-grade classrooms followed up with workshops led by SCL where students discussed ways to shrink their carbon footprints and shared information with their families.
- The SLT checked all light switch timers to ensure they were working properly and proposed shortening the length of time each switch is programmed to be on.
- With support from Highline School District, the school tracked its energy use, replaced incandescent lights with fluorescent Energy Star bulbs, and restricted the use of personal heaters, refrigerators, and other appliances in offices and classrooms.



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More environmental education

- Environmental topics were integrated into curriculum school-wide. Teachers at all grade levels discussed environmental-related current events with their classes, and informed students about the school's double-sided copying policy and classroom paper reuse bins.
- The Student Leadership Team (SLT) met twice monthly, monitored energy conservation practices and recycling in every classroom, collected classroom recyclable materials, monitored milk carton recycling at lunch, and planned an end-of-year school-wide "Zero Waste" cubby clean out.
- The SLT also continued to compost food scraps in a worm bin. The group taught two other classes how to build and care for a worm bin.
- For the school's monthly newsletter, the SLT wrote announcements with conservation facts and tips.
- Sixth-grade classes attended Camp Waskowitz, a Highline School District camp focused on environmental learning and conservation. After the camp, sixth-grade students shared information about water and energy conservation with other classrooms.

Award

Gregory Heights received a King County Earth Hero at School award in April 2008 for the collaborative effort among students, parents, principal, the PTSA, teachers, office, and support staff resulting in a school-wide recycling program with widespread participation.