



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Helen Keller Elementary School

School district: Lake Washington

School location: Kirkland

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:

September 2011

Level One of the Green Schools Program: Achieved in January 2013

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Between October 2011 and January 2013, Helen Keller Elementary increased its recycling rate from 17% to 49%, and reduced its monthly garbage volume from 50 cubic yards to 18 cubic yards.
- The school reduced garbage collection service from twice per week to once per week, saving the school district an estimated \$2,500 each year.
- Those successes were achieved because the school started to collect compostable materials in its lunchroom and staff lounge, for transport to a local composting facility, and started to collect milk cartons and other recyclable materials in the lunchroom.
- Head custodian Heather McMurchie oversaw recycling collection. Students helped by collecting recyclable materials from classrooms and placing them in hallway recycling bins.
- Ongoing announcements about the school's waste reduction and recycling efforts were made during lunch and staff meetings.
- The school received King County's waste reduction and recycling assembly to help educate students and staff about waste reduction and recycling.



Cafeteria recycling stations.



Sorting station posters in the cafeteria.



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- Bulk condiment dispensers were used in the lunchroom for condiments in highest demand, thus avoiding the waste of individual condiment packets.
- The school also reduced waste by choosing not to use straws in its lunchroom and replacing Styrofoam lunch trays with durable, washable trays.
- Parent volunteer Beth Keating and King County Green School Program staff monitored the lunchroom kick-off and helped train students to properly sort their lunch materials.
- Parent volunteers created 3-dimensional posters with actual items glued to them to help students sort recyclable and compostable materials in the lunchroom.
- Staff registered online at Target for community members, including parents/guardians, to buy needed items for the school such as durable dishes for the staff break room.
- PTA co-president Birdie Folsom included announcements in PTA newsletters about the school's waste reduction efforts.