



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Islander Middle School

School district: Mercer Island

School location: Mercer Island

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
February 2008

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

Level Two of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2011

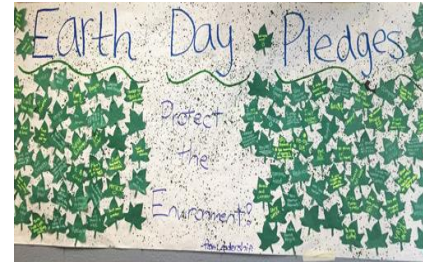
Level Three of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2015

Sustaining Green School: Achieved in

- 2017-18
- 2019-20
- 2022-23

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Gators Go Green, the student Green Team, launched a lunchroom recycling program in spring 2008 and promoted it with an assembly, daily announcements, and contests.
- Recycling bins and signs from the Green Schools Program were placed throughout the school.
- Students volunteered to teach others about what is and isn't recyclable, and family volunteers helped in the lunchroom to support student efforts.
- Kitchen staff began to collect compostable materials in fall 2010 for transport to a composting facility.
- Collection of compostable materials **reduced the school's waste by 25%.**



During Earth Week 2015, students pledged to recycle, conserve water, and plant trees



Students recycle at Islander



Recycling bins in school lunchroom



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- The faculty received a presentation on how to reduce paper use.
- At a faculty meeting, teacher Cary Spitz presented a composting video and materials to educate students about composting and how to collect compostable materials at school.
- After starting collection of compostable materials, volunteers and staff monitored the program for two weeks.
- Gators Go Green and volunteer parent Kenlyn Emerson educated staff and students about problems associated with polystyrene trays. Using models provided by the Green Schools Program, the team compiled data for the district to analyze switching to durable trays.
- Students created an education campaign to share facts about waste from purchase and use of single-use disposable trays and the benefits of using durables.
- The school received a grant from Washington State Department of Ecology to help buy durable trays. After polystyrene trays were replaced with durable trays, the volume of lunchroom garbage was **reduced by 50% and the school saved an estimated \$2,000 per year.**
- Students, with guidance and support from parent Kenlyn Emerson, teachers Cary Spitz and Alasia Heinritz, and principal Mary Jo Budzius, set goals to improve lunchroom recycling. Student team members signed up to monitor lunchroom waste stations and assist students to sort their materials after lunch.
- In fall 2014, the leadership class created a Wednesday Morning Live video on how to sort recyclable materials correctly. In Feb. 2015, the class created and displayed waste-free lunch posters to encourage students to take what they eat and eat what they take and to use durable containers for lunches brought from home.



Student-made poster shows compostable items



Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The Green Team placed “turn off the lights” stickers above light switches throughout the school.
- Leadership students created daily live morning announcements about energy conservation that were played on the school television.
- Mrs. Riccio’s students created posters to display throughout the school to promote proper dress for the season and limit adjustment of the thermostat.
- The district checked mechanical equipment twice per year, installed energy-efficient LED lights in the gym, and provided a more energy-efficient boiler for the school.
- Leadership students led an Earth Spirit week focused on conserving energy, recycling, and reducing pollution. During that week, students were asked to wear a different color based on each day’s conservation theme.
- The Green Team regularly patrolled classrooms for incidents of energy waste. Results and recommendations were shared with students and staff members.
- To conserve energy, summer programs were limited to one wing of the school.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- Signs encouraging students to turn off the water while soaping hands were placed next to sinks in all school bathrooms.
- Announcements were shared regularly over the PA system to encourage students and staff to conserve water.
- District staff installed low-flow valves when repairs to water fixtures were needed.
- Eighth-grade science students created Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about an environmental issue of their choice. The PSAs, most of which focused on water conservation, were shown to the whole school community.
- For Earth Day, students signed conservation pledges, including pledges to conserve water, which were collected and displayed as a poster in the school.
- All eighth-grade science classes completed a unit on natural resources and discussed carbon footprints, water conservation and soil erosion. The sixth-grade science classes also learned about ecosystems.



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- At all school sinks, items were washed with tubs of water and sponges instead of running the faucet continuously.
- To conserve water, the dishwasher in the staff lounge was only run with full loads.
- Drought-tolerant native plants were used in the school landscaping.
- Watering was completed in the early morning and in the evening, and sprinklers were checked by facilities staff regularly to ensure that they water the lawns and not sidewalks, driveways, and gutters.

Sustaining Green School

Islander Middle 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 is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

The Green Team began collecting data on the number of plastic bottles littered around campus. Students used the bottles to create an artistic display which included data and information about reducing waste and recycling.

Sustaining Green School 2019-20

- In September 2019, during Gator Time (a daily 30-minute advisory period), all students watched a video about lunchtime expectations at Islander Middle School related to correct sorting of lunchtime recyclable and compostable materials. Posters about correct sorting were displayed in the lunchroom.
- In morning announcements and posters, students were invited to join the team.
- Single-use water bottles were eliminated from the school in September 2019.
- Every Day is Earth Day was celebrated May 6, 2020. Each advisory class watched a video about Earth Day history and videos about youth environmental leaders. Teachers asked students to write about the impact humans have on natural resources and led discussions about conservation practices and how school and work facility closures due to COVID-19 impacted consumption and resource conservation.



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- The team met with science teacher Miranda Hayes-Francois to discuss environmental problems at school and on Mercer Island. Students proposed solutions to each challenge.

Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- Students were invited to join the Green Team through Schoology posts, fliers, and morning announcements. Led by teacher and team advisor Taylor Gall, 15 students in sixth- through eighth-grade took action to improve conservation practices at Islander Middle School, including:
 - Focusing on what students can do to make a difference, instead of what they can't do, and creating several green challenges for all-school participation.
 - Redoing lunchroom recycling, composting, and garbage 3-dimensional posters with actual items glued to them, to show students how to sort.
 - Creating a guide to help students learn sort food scraps and other compostable materials during lunch.
 - Leading an Earth Week scavenger hunt about composting at home.
 - Hosting a battery collection drive during Earth Week.
 - Creating Little Free Library packets which students could take to learn about sustainable practices, including water and energy conservation.
 - Encouraging students to walk, bike, carpool, or take the bus to school.
 - Collecting used markers to send to a company to be recycled.
 - Setting goals for the following school year and creating summer green challenges for students to carry out during the summer months.
- Teachers were reminded to unplug electronics when not in use, especially before weekends and school breaks.

Award

Islander Middle School received a King County Earth Heroes at School award in 2009.