



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Kent School District

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
March 2008

Level One of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2012

Level Two of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2013

Level Three of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2013

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- From 2009 - 2013, the district reduced its garbage volume by more than 50% and increased its recycling volume in each facility by an average of 50%.
- As of May 2013, 31 schools in Kent School District had met Green Schools Program waste reduction and recycling criteria and were recognized as Level One King County Green Schools.
 - **June 2023 update:** 43 district schools had received Green Schools Program assistance, 37 schools had received recognition as Level One Green Schools for their waste reduction and recycling practices, 17 schools had been recognized as Level Two Green Schools, 12 schools as Level Three Green Schools, and 7 schools as Sustaining Green Schools.
- In all school cafeterias, the district minimized waste by replacing plastic-wrapped utensils and straws with individual selection of unwrapped utensils and straws offered through sanitary dispensers.
- To reduce paper use, the district adopted a double-sided photocopying and printing policy. Instructions were placed on all printers and photocopy machines to promote the policy and to aid staff.



Springbrook Elementary School student Green Team receiving its Green Schools recognition banner in 2012



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- The district was proactive about recycling. At least twice during the school year, district staff monitored monthly garbage and recycling volumes from each school facility. Per capita recycling rates and garbage volumes were calculated and reported to principals and custodians. As volumes changed, district staff adjusted garbage and recycling collection services.
- Several schools collected food scraps and food-soiled paper such as napkins for transport to Cedar Grove Composting, a regional composting facility.
- Most district schools took advantage of King County's assembly program and classroom workshops about stewardship, waste reduction, and recycling.
- All computers in the district were reused, donated, or recycled. The district's IT department set up a computer donation program called Bridging the Gap. When older but still functioning computers were replaced, older computers were donated to eligible families in the community. This program connected families and students to technology opportunities and kept functioning computer equipment out of the waste stream. All computer batteries and wiring were collected and recycled rather than disposed.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The district placed energy conservation suggestion boxes in visible locations in each school. Email and online recommendations also were encouraged.
- Kent School District reduced electricity and natural gas use from 2009 - 2013 by installing energy management systems on 14 school HVAC (heating, ventilation, air-conditioning systems), establishing district-wide building use standards for heating and cooling, and upgrading lighting systems.
- The district established a policy to turn off or put to sleep all computer monitors, computer peripherals, and other electronics when not in use. Outside lights were turned off during daylight hours.
- Incandescent bulbs were replaced with Energy Star fluorescent bulbs and tubes. Custodians placed burned out fluorescent bulbs and tubes in original shipping boxes. Full boxes were stored on pallets in the district warehouse. Twice each year the bulbs and tubes were recycled by Ecolights Northwest.



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- Vending machine lights were controlled by timers, and the front display panels of vending machines were permanently turned off.
- Millennium Elementary set the standard for green building in the district, with its energy-efficient HVAC (heating ventilation and air conditioning) systems using ground source heat and cooling, a roof top solar panel system, rain water capture system for irrigation, domestic water conservation features, pervious pavement, and a nature garden and path featuring a wet land habitat. As other schools were renovated and built, energy- and water-efficient designs minimized costs and environmental impact.
- Kent School District partnered with Energy Education Inc. which required all buildings in the district to participate in the US EPA Energy Star energy use tracking system, routine building audits to verify building systems were shut down as scheduled, and conservation education for school staff.
- Natural gas use was reduced by 9.2% and electricity use by 8% in 2008-09. In 2009-10 natural gas use was reduced 8.8% and electricity use by 2.6%. In 2010-11 natural gas use was reduced 3.9% and electricity use by 8.8%. In 2011-12 natural gas use was reduced 5% percent and electricity use by 7%.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- The district established a system to regularly check, report, and correct water leaks, standing water, or running water in places it should not be.
- To reduce indoor water use, aerators were placed on all sink faucets. For new sink installations, motions sensors have become the district standard.
- To clean sidewalks and other outdoor areas on school grounds, brooms, rakes and leaf blowers were used instead of pressure washing or hoses.
- When new plants were added to a school campus, drought-tolerant species were chosen so extra watering was not necessary during warmer months.
- Water was collected in rain barrels and the captured water was used to irrigate school gardens and grounds.



- When new playfields were installed, the district added at least six inches of top soil or compost to increase water-holding capacity. Rain gardens and organic gardens have been established at many schools to conserve water.

Other conservation practices

- The district's indoor air quality (IAQ) management program started in 2004 and was designed to respond to occupant concerns with straightforward, easy steps to document concerns. Head custodians followed a standard building inspection checklist.
- The district's IAQ management program reduced asthma and allergy triggers by establishing classroom standards to eliminate clutter and dust, maintain cleanliness, and promptly identify water intrusion. As a result, the IAQ management program received the EPA 2004 Excellence Award.
- To reduce environmental impacts of long-distance transportation and to support local farmers and businesses, the district collaborated with Washington State Department of Agriculture to develop a Farm to School Program to buy produce grown in Washington and the Northwest.
- As of May 2013, seven elementary schools were participating in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program sponsored by the National School Lunch Program. The district purchased as many local food products as possible.

Environmental education

- Environmental science courses available to all students have been offered in high schools. The courses included labs, computer simulations, individual and group projects, and guest speakers.
- Environmental science course topics included Sustainability, Biodiversity, and Climate Change. One goal was to inspire students to pursue careers that balance the needs of society and the environment.
- Each year from 2000-2013, through a partnership with City of Kent Parks Department, district elementary school students helped plant over 24,000 native trees and shrubs in City of Kent parks.



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Awards

- Kent School District received the U.S. Green Ribbon School District award in 2013, one of 14 school districts nationwide honored with the first-ever district award in the U.S. Green Ribbon recognition program. One district could be nominated from each participating state to receive this award.
- King County Earth Heroes at School awards were received by the following schools and staff in the Kent School District from 2003 - 2013:
 - Crestwood Elementary School (2003)
 - Teacher Vince Howard, Kentridge High School (2004)
 - Teacher Nancy Reidel, Kent Elementary School (2004)
 - Teacher Stuart Steere, Lake Youngs Elementary School (2008)
 - Teacher Wendy Shol, Crestwood Elementary School (2009)
 - Teacher Dianne Thompson, Kent-Meridian High School (2010)
 - Martin Sortun Elementary School (2010)
 - Kent-Meridian High School (2010 and 2011)
 - Dianne Thompson's Third Period Environmental Science Class (2011)
 - Springbrook Elementary School, the Student Association of Vampire Elimination S.A.V.E. program (2011)
 - Head custodian Ginger Ott and Scenic Hill Elementary School (2011)
 - Mattson Middle School Support Center (2011)

Comment

Kent School District is the fourth largest school district in the state, serving over 27,000 students and 2,100 employees. King County Green Schools Program has successfully provided the district comprehensive program support to standardize environmental awareness efforts throughout all schools and departments. The district's carbon footprint has been reduced and environmental awareness of students and staff has increased. Kent School District looks forward to many years of partnering with King County to maintain and raise environmental awareness.

- **Beth Gilbertson**, environmental services supervisor, Kent School District, 2013