



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

## Lakeridge Elementary School

**School district:** Mercer Island

**School location:** Mercer Island

**Began participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
December 2009

**Level One of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in May 2010

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

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

**Sustaining Green School:** Achieved in

- 2015-16
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20
- 2021-22
- 2022-23

### Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Lakeridge maintained a recycling rate of 52%.
- Students used posters and announcements to educate the school community about how to sort waste correctly.
- The Green Team placed stickers from the Green Schools Program showing what can be recycled on classroom and lunchroom recycling bins.
- The school reduced lunchtime garbage volume by recycling empty plastic bottles, aluminum cans, juice boxes, and milk cartons.



Student show off their 3-D posters



Parent volunteers Carolyn Berkley Counihan and Nancy Weil at 2010 Mercer Island Leap for Green Fair



Lakeridge Recycling Club



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- Parent volunteers introduced a waste-free lunch initiative to educate students and their families about choosing reusable containers and buying in bulk to reduce packaging waste in lunches from home.
- When Lakeridge began lunchroom collection of food scraps, which were collected weekly by Cedar Grove Composting, the school's weekly lunchroom trash volume was cut from 700 pounds to 85 pounds.
- Student and parent volunteers monitored the food scrap bins when students lined up to throw out their scraps at the end of each lunch.
- Green Team members wore King County Green Team aprons to identify themselves as waste station monitors.
- At the annual fundraising breakfast in 2013, Lakeridge generated only a single container of landfill trash after feeding close to 400 attendees.
- The PTA required use of compostable utensils at all-school events, such as Bingo night, fundraising breakfast, and the fall picnic. Parent and Green Team volunteers were assigned to assist with sorting and disposal of event waste.
- In 2012-13, Green Team students collected bottle caps for each classroom to use for bottle-cap mosaics to display in the school library.
- The PTA purchased reusable water jug containers to discourage disposable water bottles and to encourage school groups to use the water jugs with durable or compostable cups at school events.
- Classroom parents were encouraged to host parties that generated less waste by using finger foods, unpackaged items, and reusable decorations.



Green Team members helped fellow students correctly place items in recycling, food scrap, and garbage bins



Students worked in school garden



Students created art for the school's "waste less food" pledge wall



- Prior to class parties, the Green Team delivered compostable utensils, plates, and cups with instructions to each classroom.
- Lakeridge ordered beginning-of-the-year student school supplies in bulk. Parents paid a set fee and the school supplies were delivered to each classroom to avoid packaging and energy waste that would have been generated if each family traveled to a store to purchase school supplies.



Green Team students led a class green transportation competition for National Bike and Walk to School Day

## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Green Team members patrolled classrooms to ensure all lights and equipment were turned off when not in use.
- The district received a grant from Puget Sound Energy (PSE) to use software to analyze energy use. Thanks to parent volunteer and district Green Team member Mark Li, the energy conservation analysis was accomplished using monthly data reports for gas and electrical meters provided by PSE.
- Lakeridge kept staff members informed of their energy conservation progress by publishing and posting the school's energy use data.
- On the PTA website, the school informed parents about the cost of school energy use and how to reduce energy consumption both at home and at school.
- For the week surrounding Earth Day in April 2011, students read a "tip of the day" on how to conserve energy.
- Lakeridge enabled sensors that detect movement and sound in each classroom to automatically turn off the lights when the room is empty.
- The school's vending machine display lights were permanently turned off.
- Incandescent lights were replaced with fluorescent bulbs throughout the school.
- Through the school newspaper and via email, Lakeridge parents and staff members were notified about energy conservation efforts.
- With support from students, custodians, principal, parents, and teachers, the school established a school theme of Together We Can Save Energy!



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- Lakeridge participated in the PSE Green Power Challenge. The PTA recruited family participation school event PTA tables and articles in the school newsletter. Thirty-six Lakeridge families signed up for the challenge, thereby earning \$360 for the Green Team.
- Environmental attorney David L. Benson presented at a monthly Green Team meeting on energy and its ramifications for the planet.

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

- Students made morning announcements with tips on reducing water pollution, avoiding disposable, single-use water bottles, and encouraging water conservation.
- Green Team students tested school water faucets for drips and malfunctioning equipment. They reported their findings to the head custodian.
- Third- and fifth-grade students participated in a watershed marine unit.
- Green Team students and their parents applied storm drain stencils reading “Dump No Waste, Drains to Sound” on all outdoor school drains.
- The Lakeridge Learning Garden, which the Garden Committee completed in spring 2011, included areas for each grade level to plant and maintain.
- The school’s Healthy Ways to School Program encouraged students and their families to walk, bike, carpool or take the bus to school once each week in order to reduce their carbon footprint.

## **Sustaining Green School recognition**

The 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 each year is described below.

## **Sustaining Green School 2015-16**

- Students created and posted signs with reminders about conservation practices such as packing lunches with reusable and recyclable containers.
- The PTA hosted zero waste holiday and school-wide events at which only compostable and recyclable materials were used.
- The school participated in a clothing donation drive.
- All exterior lights were switched to LED.



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- In fall 2015, Lakeridge hosted the King County Earth Challenge assembly which taught students about waste reduction and recycling practices.
- In a 2015 parent newsletter, the Green Team educated families about benefits of repurposing old items and creating gifts from recyclable and used materials. Students created gifts made from discarded materials.

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

- To promote sustainable practices, the Green Team created a video with the help of parent volunteer Nancy Weil.
- Ms. Weil and teacher Heather McLyman applied for a U.S. Green Ribbon award.
- For Earth Week 2017, the Green Team created a video focused on ocean plastics and what to do about them. Video: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=GZG9Ndr8Mxo>

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

- The Green Team started a petition in the school and community to reduce the polystyrene (Styrofoam) and proposed a Styrofoam ban on Mercer Island. Students compiled educational materials about environmental benefits of reducing Styrofoam waste and shared them with the community.
- The Green Team created a “waste less food” pledge and prepared a food waste pledge wall where students signed their names. The project was presented during Earth Week along with the tally of total pledges.

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

- Before the end of year holiday season, the Green Team shared information in announcements and newsletters about reducing waste and shopping locally.
- The Green Team started a “just say no” campaign to discourage use of straws, plastic bags, receipts, and other disposable items.

## **Sustaining Green School 2019-20**

- Students participated in a sorting workshop led by the Green Schools Program.
- Students conducted an audit by photographing school garbage and recycling bins and then running an education campaign targeting items commonly missorted.



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- Lakeridge celebrated National Walk and Bike to School Day by partnering with local law enforcement to teach students about bike safety. In a school-wide contest, classes competed to see which class had the most students who walked and biked to school on October 2, 2019.

## **Sustaining Green School 2021-22**

- Heather McLyman, teacher and Green Team advisor, and Nancy Weil, PTA volunteer, led the Lakeridge Green Team of 20 students.
- Every few months, a different topic such as reducing waste, recycling, composting, and water conservation, was selected for team focus.
- The student council newsletter and PTA newsletter regularly included articles about Green Team activities throughout the year.
- The Green Team emptied classroom recycling bins and informed classes when there were items not accepted for recycling.
- Students participated in a King County workshop to create an upcycled art display made of plastic and other packaging material.
- The school's water bottle filling station made it easy for students to use their durable water bottles.
- Classrooms have lights with motion sensors, faucet aerators which conserve water, and restroom faucets with automatic timed shutoffs to prevent water waste.
- The team promoted a one-week district-wide campaign to collect empty plastic bags and other plastic film for recycling through Ridwell, a company which collects materials not picked up curbside to be recycled.

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

- The 26 Green Team members, led by Heather McLyman, met twice each month, invited guest speakers to share about a variety of conservation topics, and again worked with Ridwell to collect plastic film.
- Collection of recyclable and compostable materials continued in the lunchroom.
- Classroom collection of recyclable materials was supported by Green Team members who empty the recycling bins twice each week on a rotating schedule.
- Third- to fifth-grade classrooms started to collect food scraps and other compostable materials.



- The Green Team cleaned up the school learning garden, worked with the PTA to prepare planter beds for new plantings, and made signs for each planter box.
- The school hosted the King County assembly about waste reduction and recycling, and third-grade classrooms participated in King County habitat stewardship workshops.

## **Award**

In 2017, Lakeridge Elementary School received a 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).