



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

## Martin Sortun Elementary School

**School district:** Kent

**School location:** Kent

**Began participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
May 2008

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

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

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

### Waste reduction and recycling

- Martin Sortun increased its recycling rate from 20% to 57%, and cut garbage volume by 50% by improving classroom recycling and starting to recycle at lunchtime.
- The school started a student Green Club led by staff member Scott Meyer to support conservation practices. More than 80 students attended its first meeting, so staff advisors narrowed the group through an application process.
- Club members monitored lunchroom recycling, mentored younger students, developed new ideas to conserve waste, and led conservation campaigns to promote recycling through posters, morning announcements, and a year-long lunchroom monitoring system.
- Instead of using disposable polystyrene trays, food was brought to each table on large metal trays.
- Recycling bins from the Green Schools Program were placed in the lunchroom for empty milk cartons, juice boxes, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans.



Mural featuring energy conservation and reuse.



Mural about recycling and water conservation.



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- School staff placed recycling stickers from the Green Schools Program on all indoor recycling bins to show what can be recycled.
- In 2010-11, the school created a Going Green book with tips from A to Z. For example, “A” stands for “Awareness: be aware of what you buy and use.”

## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Green Club students encouraged fellow students to recognize how their everyday choices and actions make a difference. Through The Power is in Your Hands campaign, students created “lights off” stickers and posted them by light switches school-wide.
- The school participated in Cool Schools, <http://www.coolschoolchallenge.org/about-us.aspx>, a program which motivates schools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- To save energy and heat, after-hours activities were centralized into common areas.
- Blinds were opened during the day to use natural light and save energy, and closed at the end of the day to conserve energy.
- Custodial staff used energy conservation checklists prior to school breaks to make sure energy was not wasted during breaks.

## Water Conservation (Level Three)

- Green Club students led an informational campaign to turn off water faucets when not in use and to report leaking toilets.
- Students learned about keeping fresh water clean free from pollutants, and to avoid pouring hazardous or toxic materials down the drain. Students also learned about watersheds and the water cycle through field trips and outdoor education.
- Students created posters to place around the school to share information about how to conserve and protect water.
- At monthly assemblies, Martin Sortun recognized students and classrooms who modeled conservation practices. Students earned individual recognition as Green Individual of the Month and classrooms earned a Green Class award for conservation behaviors.



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## Environmental Education

- Kindergarten students explored the world of marine life, and learned about animals that live in the ocean and how they depend on clean water and habitat.
- First-grade students explored the life cycle of insects, and learned how all insects play a role in our ecosystem.
- Second-grade students studied how humans interact with and depend on plant resources.
- Third-grader students studied the water cycle, the role of pollution, and actions they can take to protect water resources.
- Fourth-grade teachers and students developed a native plant garden at the school entrance, learning how native plants sustain habitat and reduce water consumption. They decorated raised beds with conservation images and slogans.
- Fifth-grade students studied erosion and how preservation of forests helps reduce erosion and support the health of our ecosystem.
- Sixth-grade leaders educated and led fellow Green Club students.

## Award

Martin Sortun's Green Club received a King County Earth Hero at School award in April 2010.

## Comment

“So the coolest thing just happened. I was sitting in my office which is next to the library. Two kids walked by and stopped at the recycling and trash bins and I overheard one say, ‘Dude! Why is there so much recycling in the garbage?’ Conservation is becoming part of the culture at our school, with buy-in from students and staff.”

– **Scott Meyer, Educational Assistant**