



Mercer Island High School

School district: Mercer Island

School location: Mercer Island

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
June 2010

Level One of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in April 2011

Level Two of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in April 2012

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

Sustaining Green School recognition:

- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20
- 2022-23

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Mercer Island High achieved and maintained a recycling rate of 68%.
- Disposable plastic utensils and polystyrene (Styrofoam) plates, cups, and containers were replaced with compostable serving-ware.
- The number of lunchroom garbage bins was reduced from more than 30 to eight, thanks to collection of recyclable and compostable materials during lunch.
- In an advisory class period, students were taught how to sort lunch waste. The lesson included a video about what happens to recyclable and compostable materials after they are collected.



Teacher Jamie Cooke receives King County Earth Hero at School award



Students sort their recyclable and compostable materials in the lunchroom



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- During ninth-grade orientation, students were introduced to the school's green practices and policies.
- In 2013, the school held a Green Day where 25 leadership students visited each lunch table to help students sort their lunch waste.
- Students donated old computers at a school-wide computer drive. Interconnection, a local non-profit, collected and refurbished the computers and accessories and distributed them to underserved schools.
- The Green Team created a video about how to limit paper towel use at school.
- In 2015, student Green Team members attended the YMCA environmental symposium and brought back ideas for future projects.
- To reduce single-use plastic bottles, the school retrofitted a water fountain to make it possible to refill durable water bottles. The new hydration station tracked the number of bottles that were filled. In the first four days after installation, the station filled 1,000 bottles.
- In 2012, a cell phone recycling campaign collected more than 100 cell phones. The phones were sent to companies to be refurbished, reused, or sustainably reprocessed to reuse the metals.
- One-sided paper collection boxes were distributed.
- The Green Team created and posted waste reduction and sorting signs in the cafeteria, classrooms, and hallways.
- To reduce paper use, all freshman and sophomores were given iPads in 2014-15.
- Teachers participated in workshops to encourage posting handouts online and accepting electronic submission of student work in order to reduce printing.



Water bottle refilling station at the school

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- A competition to reduce energy use in classrooms included posting signs near light switches about turning off lights in unoccupied rooms, and above copy



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machines and computers about turning off equipment at the end of each day.

The number of rooms with lights turned off after school increased by 10%.

- Energy conservation tips for classrooms were shared with staff at three meetings throughout the school year.
- A PTSA newsletter article brought attention to the problem of idling cars waiting to pick up students. “No Idling” signs were posted in the front of the school.
- Many weekly Green Tip announcements focused on conserving energy as well as recycling and reducing waste.
- During Earth Week 2012, students created a video about conserving energy.
- All light bulbs were replaced with LED efficiency bulbs.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- The Green Team co-hosted a water quality discussion with Prakash Sharma, Splash-Nepal director, who helped obtain clean water for Kathmandu schools.
- On World Water Day, announcements were made in the school bulletin and a video was played in many classrooms about water scarcity, water treatment, water use, and water conservation.
- Water conservation tips were shared regularly in the school bulletin.
- During one lunch, over 150 students signed a pledge not to purchase bottled water and received Green Team reusable water bottles.
- A rain garden with interpretive signs was installed in front of the school.
- Outdoor watering was completed in the early morning or evening, and facilities staff checked sprinklers to ensure they water the lawns instead of concrete.
- The school conducted a water assessment in every restroom in the building.
- The district replaced broken water fixtures with water-efficient fixtures, and students and staff were encouraged to report leaks to maintenance staff.

Sustaining Green School recognition

Mercer Island High sustained and built on its Level One waste reduction and recycling practices, Level Two energy conservation practices, and Level Three water



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conservation strategies. How the school built on its Level One through Three achievements each year is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

The Green Team made a video about waste reduction shown during morning announcements. Students created informational signs about the importance of conserving natural resources and displayed them in hallways throughout the school.

Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- Students met with Principal Puckett to discuss recycling and composting strategies in the lunchroom and at sports events.
- The Green Team sent out a survey to all students for ideas about recycling.
- The school started working with the YMCA Earth Service Corps representative to discuss sustainability goals and educate students on what other schools were doing to increase awareness and sustainability.
- Green Team members shared Earth Day lessons on composting and recycling.

Sustaining Green School 2019-20

- In Sept. 2019, the Green Team club was promoted through PA announcements, at a lunch fair where the club had a table, and at a staff meeting.
- At the start of the 2019-20 school year, Green Team advisors asked teachers to remind students about best practices for waste sorting. Posters were displayed in the cafeteria to show students where different items should be sorted.
- In Feb. 2020, the Green Team created posters to show sustainable actions in the Mercer Island community, and discussed single-use plastic water bottle use on campus with the athletic trainer, coaches, and an assistant principal.
- In fall 2020, the Green Team created a video consisting of interviews of various on-campus clubs about what they do to be more sustainable. The team included information about how to be sustainable at home and a clip about sustainability from Sounders player Jordan Morris.



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Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- The Green Team of 23 students, led by teachers Jamie Cooke and Julia DeBroux met every other Monday, invited new students to join at eighth-grade transition day, curriculum night, and in announcements and during Green Week activities.
- The team completed two major projects.
 - Hosting a lunch talk with Dr. King, University of Washington glaciologist, in partnership with the Career and Technology department. The event attracted about 150 students. Dr. King shared her research and career path.
 - Coordinating with district elementary schools to share environmental lessons with interactive activities. Four high school Green Team members presented about sustainability to 60 Island Park Elementary fourth-grade students.
- The team helped organize collection of empty plastic bags and other plastic film for pick up by Ridwell, a company that collects plastic film for recycling.
- Staff received reminders to shut down lights and equipment before breaks.
- The team monitored energy used in 2022-23 and compared it to last years' use.
- The team worked with custodians to determine if the quantity of emergency lights could be reduced, since those lights stayed on for 24 hours.
- To conserve water, school water faucets were recalibrated to release less water.

Awards

- Jamie Cooke, teacher and Green Team advisor, received a King County Earth Heroes at School award in April 2011.
- Mercer Island School District was one of 42 districts in Washington to receive a grant for building system improvements to yield energy cost savings. The grant was used to help buy energy-efficient lighting, boilers, and central boiler controls for Mercer Island High School.