

Newcastle Elementary School

School district: Issaquah

School location: Newcastle

Began Participating in the Green Schools Program:
September 2009

Level One of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in April 2010

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

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

Sustaining Green School recognition:
Achieved in...

- 2014-15
- 2015-16
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2021-22



Newcastle staff with Executive Constantine after accepting a King County Earth Hero at School award in April 2012



Green Team students learn to sort garbage, recyclables and compostable materials to assist others in the cafeteria

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Newcastle Elementary achieved a recycling rate of 51%.
- In addition to continuing its long-standing classroom and lunchroom recycling practices, in 2009 the school began to collect food scraps and other compostable materials for transport to a regional composting facility.
- King County Green Schools Program trained over 50 third- to fifth-grade students to serve as Waste Watchers to monitor and assist at lunchroom sorting stations.
- School staff maintained the monitoring schedule, but if a student wanted to switch days or take a day off, it was the student's responsibility to find a replacement. This made scheduling easier for staff.



- In 2011, the volunteer Waste Watcher club students took their expertise to Amazon to teach Amazon staff how to reduce waste and collect recyclable and compostable materials. The students were featured in the Newcastle News.
- The school promoted Waste-Free Wednesdays to encourage students to reduce wasted food and to bring lunches from home in reusable containers.
- Bins in classrooms, offices, staff rooms, and lunchroom were color-coded (blue recycling bins and yellow food scrap bins), and paired with garbage bins. A sticker from the Green Schools Program was attached to each recycling, food scrap, and garbage bin to show what materials should be placed in each bin.
- A student in each class was responsible for depositing classroom recyclable materials into designated recycling bins in the hall or lunchroom.
- In 2010-11, the school sent Lunchables containers and Elmer's glue sticks and bottles to TerraCycle which used the materials to make new products.
- In 2011-12, TerraCycle discontinued Ziploc bag and Capri-Sun drink pouch recycling at Newcastle, so staff encouraged students to use refillable, reusable drink and food storage containers to reduce trash and conserve resources.
- Along with all schools in the district, Newcastle replaced plastic-wrapped utensils with unwrapped utensils and eliminated drinking straws.
- To reduce paper use, the school switched from printed meeting minutes to emailing agendas and minutes, and school, PTSA, and class newsletters were sent out electronically and only printed for those that requested them.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Teachers and students posted signs throughout the school with reminders to shut down computers, monitors, and projectors when they were not needed. Stickers reminding staff and students to turn off lights when leaving rooms were placed next to each light switch.
- Students shared energy conservation tips with their families.
- Natural light was used instead of electric lights when appropriate.
- Students in the after-school program performed a sweep of the school at the end of each week to make sure all computers and monitors are shut off over the weekend.
- Staff made sure blinds and windows were shut over the weekends and thermostats were set as low as possible.



- The technology specialist checked all computers to make sure they had updated energy-saving software and settings. Computers were automatically shut-down each night around 6:00 p.m. using school district software.
- The school shared energy conservation tips and successes with the entire school in classroom and school newsletters and in weekly cafeteria announcements.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- While continuing its waste reduction and recycling practices, water conservation was encouraged. Monthly Green School emails were distributed to staff with tips on how to conserve water and report leaks, and teachers shared information with their classes on why water conservation matters and how to conserve water.
- The school installed low-flow faucets, timers on restroom sinks, and a self-monitoring irrigation system whereby the district monitors and adjusts water use.
- Announcements were made during lunches and in the school-wide newsletter throughout the year to keep the school community informed about the school's water conservation efforts.
- A patrol of students from two classes walked school grounds periodically to look for leaks or standing water and then report problems to maintenance staff.
- Water conservation topics were built into student curriculum. Second-grade students learned about local wetlands and how they can prevent water pollution. Third-grade students studied the impact of local watersheds on salmon and marked storm drains in City of Issaquah.
- Fourth-grade students studied how water is cleaned, designed water filters after studying water issues in India, and visited the King County Brightwater treatment plant to learn how wastewater is treated. A guest plumber taught the half-day kindergarten classes where their water comes from and how it gets to the tap.
- Students studied their local watershed, water quality testing, properties of water, and how water is polluted. One fourth-grade class used a science curriculum called River Xchange where students were assigned science pen pals in New Mexico.



Sustaining Green School Recognition

Newcastle Elementary sustained 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 2014-15

- The school moved its compostable Dixie-style cups from the start of the lunch line to a spot farther away to encourage students to drink from the water fountain instead of single-use cups. This simple act cut the school's cup use roughly in half.
- Fifth-grade students conducted a nutrition study comparing chocolate milk and regular milk. They concluded chocolate milk was less healthy than regular milk, and water was the best option of the three. The students promoted the healthiest choices and encouraged fellow students to bring a reusable water bottle instead of single-use plastic water bottles.

Sustaining Green School 2015-16

- To help the school continue its waste reduction and recycling practices, student Waste Watchers presented in classrooms about ways to reduce waste as well as what can be composted and recycled
- The school partnered with Mountains to Sound Greenway, Newcastle's PTSA, and Seattle's Sawdust Supply to design and install a school garden of native drought-resistant plants. Fifth-grade students helped plant and maintain the garden.

Sustaining Green School 2016-17

- Newcastle obtained an additional bin to collect food scraps and other compostable materials in its lunchroom.
- The staff lounge began collecting food scraps and compostable paper products. Pictures of what belongs in each bin were laminated and attached to each bin.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

The school continued its waste reduction and recycling practices. The lunchroom replaced all single-use disposable utensils with reusable durable utensils.



Sustaining Green School 2018-19

The student Green Team used posters and announcements to promote how to use only one paper towel to dry one's hands.

Sustaining Green School 2021-22

- Educational videos about conservation practices were shared and signs were posted around the school to remind students and staff to conserve paper, recycle, conserve water, and turn off lights when they are not needed.
- Teachers and students made sure students' laptops and other electronics were shut down over long breaks.
- Teachers collected used markers, pens, and glue sticks to ship to TerraCycle, a company which used those materials to create a variety of products.

Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- Teachers Jessica Burnham and Will Bland, along with custodian Shannon McNiel, led efforts to maintain waste reduction, recycling, and other conservation practices.
- The Green Team of 43 students in third- through fifth-grades, helped teach students what materials should be placed in recycling bins, food scrap bins, and garbage bins. The team created a short video about recycling for teachers to share with their classes, and made 3-dimensional posters with actual items attached to post above lunchroom bins to show how to sort.
- Each classroom had a Good On One Side bin for paper used only on one side, so students and staff could use the blank side for notes.
- The team made announcements and posters for Earth Week, and created signs for soap pumps about turning on water only after scrubbing with soap.
- The school continued collecting empty glue sticks and markers to be recycled through TerraCycle, a company that used those materials to make new products.

Awards

- The Waste Watcher program at Newcastle Elementary was honored at the City of Newcastle's 2012 Earth Day event where over 40 students received certificates.
- In April 2012 Newcastle Elementary School's Waste Watcher program received a King County Earth Hero at School Award.