

## North Hill Elementary School

**School district:** Highline

**School location:** Des Moines

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

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

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

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

**Sustaining Green School recognition:**  
Achieved in

- 2015-16
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20



Students cut up old plastic bags to weave into durable, reusable grocery bags



Fifth-grade students display their model Future Cities made from recycled and reused materials

### Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- North Hill Elementary achieved and maintained a recycling rate of 51%.
- With support from teacher Sherry Edwards and custodian Mary Hanson, the school started milk carton recycling and recycled about 425 milk cartons each day. To kick off milk carton recycling, the custodian placed several hundred milk cartons on a tarp in the courtyard and spoke with students about the program.
- Classroom recycling bins with signs from the Green Schools Program showing what can be recycled were placed throughout the school.
- Ecology Club students made posters about recycling, and presented to 18 classrooms about waste reduction and recycling practices.



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

---

- The Ecology Club conducted weekly classroom waste audits and left on the door of each classroom a Recycling Report Card with suggestions for improving waste reduction and recycling practices. Classrooms with successful recycling practices were given a certificate of recognition.
- Several worm bins were added to help the school compost food scraps, and teachers incorporated care and feeding of the worms into their curriculum.
- Throughout the school, one-sided copies were placed in bins or trays for reuse.
- North Hill collected printer cartridges, cell phones, and juice pouches separately and sent them to companies which paid the school for the materials and used them to make new products. The revenue was used to support Ecology Club activities.
- Teacher Sherry Edwards requested and received a PTSA grant to buy Green Team t-shirts. Every Monday the team wears the shirts.
- The school reduced paper by making double-sided copies and using the blank sides of paper. Families were asked to bring in paper used only on one side, since students used so much paper printed on one side.
- In February 2017 the Ecology Club presented to all classrooms about school waste reduction and recycling practices, and the school hosted King County assembly and classroom workshops about waste reduction and recycling.
- Students used posters and regular lunchtime announcements which included a question-and-answer session to demonstrate what can be recycled and why recycling and waste reduction are important.
- The school's Ecology Club met weekly and completed projects such as monitoring energy conservation and recycling practices in classrooms, collecting empty juice pouches for recycling by TerraCycle, and collecting plastic bags and crocheting them together to make durable grocery bags.



## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The Ecology Club conducted spot checks of the entire school to ensure all classrooms, offices, restrooms, and other spaces had energy conservation signs.
- The Ecology Club monitored energy use in each classroom and posted signs on light switches and computer equipment to encourage staff and students to turn off lights and equipment in unoccupied spaces.
- Teachers were encouraged to turn off at least one bank of lights in their classrooms whenever adequate daylight was available.
- Fluorescent bulbs were removed from the pop machine in the staff lounge.
- Incandescent bulbs were replaced by fluorescent bulbs throughout the school.
- Custodian Brian Parker installed motion sensor activated lights in classrooms, offices, and other shared spaces, and programmed hallway lights to activate at 50% capacity.
- Highline Public Schools tracked the school's energy use and restricted use of personal heaters, refrigerators, and other appliances in offices and classrooms.

## Water Conservation (Level Three)

- From 2008 to 2011, North Hill reduced its domestic water use by almost 12,000 gallons per month. The school reported its water use in monthly school newsletters.
- To encourage students to turn off the faucet when not in use, the school posted water conservation signs on all sinks that don't have automatic shut-off faucets.
- In the fall and spring, Ecology Club members conducted water audits to look for water leaks on school grounds.
- Students studied water quality, salmon, and toured a local wastewater treatment plant.
- Staff and students signed water conservation pledges.
- North Hill collected roof run-off water, which provided all water needed to irrigate the native plant garden. With a grant from the school building fund, water quality testing materials were bought to test the quality of the collected water.
- The school conserved water by using faucet aerators and timed sprinklers.



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

---

## **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**

- To divert food scraps and food-soiled paper from the landfill, the school started collecting those compostable materials during lunch.
- The Ecology Club performed audits of rooms throughout the school to ensure recycling, waste reduction, energy and water conservation practices were followed.
- A King County Green Team specialist led workshops on environmental stewardship in fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms.
- A native plant garden was installed in the former courtyard and classrooms used the garden as an environmental education learning tool.

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

- The school hosted weekly waste-free Wednesdays in spring 2017 to encourage waste reduction practices. The principal made announcements before waste-free Wednesdays to remind students to pack a waste-free lunch and to "take only what you can eat and eat what you take." Ecology Club students created posters to display around the school to promote waste-free Wednesdays.
- The school's monthly newsletter included an Earth Matters section devoted to conservation facts and tips.
- First- and second-grade students hosted Native Plant Society workshops.

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

- The Ecology Club met with Aviation High's Ecology Club to share their conservation successes and goals.
- Signs were installed in the drive-through to encourage drivers to turn off cars, reduce idle time, and close gaps between cars during pick-up and drop-off.



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

---

## Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- To reduce food waste, a food share table was set up at lunch so students could place or take packaged, unopened foods from the lunch program.
- Staff members collected food scraps and other compostable materials in the staff lounge for transfer to a regional composting facility.
- In spring 2019, the school started a pilot program to collect compostable materials in the lunchroom for third, fourth, and fifth grades.
- Teacher Sherry Edwards trained Ecology Club students to conduct classroom waste audits, encourage correct sorting, and reduce contamination. Students made announcements and posters to help students sort correctly.
- Coats were collected to be donated during the fall Coat Drive.
- The Green Schools Program presented about conservation practices at a staff meeting.
- Fifth-grade students participated in a Green Team workshop where students learned about the importance of recycling and waste reduction and brainstormed ways to share what they learned with other students.
- Students designed Future Cities models using only reused and recycled materials. The models were displayed throughout the school.
- Sixth-grade students attended Waskowitz Outdoor School and learned about watersheds, water pollution prevention, and water conservation.
- Students completed a salmon project to learn about the salmon life cycle, salmon habitat needs, and water pollution prevention strategies. They also helped maintain a tank to raise and later release Coho salmon.
- North Hill staff collected used markers for recycling by the Crayola ColorCycle program. The school also collected unwanted used candles and donated them to Waskowitz Outdoor School to be used as fire starters.



King County Green Schools Program

# *Success Story*

*Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink*

---

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

- The school newsletter included tips about how to reduce food waste.
- Assistant principal May Ovalles expanded the food scrap collection pilot to reduce the amount of materials going to the landfill.
- Fourth- and fifth-grade student volunteers helped their fellow students sort leftover food scraps into an organics container, weighed the collected food scraps, and shared the results with students and staff.
- In fall 2019, students and staff collected plastic bags and film for recycling by the Trex Recycling Program. Trex used those materials to make decks and fences.

## **Award**

Teacher Sherry Edwards received a King County Earth Hero at School award in April 2009 for her contributions to North Hill's sustainability practices.