



## **Northwood Elementary School**

**School district:** Mercer Island School District

**School location:** Mercer Island

**Began participating in the Green Schools Program:** August 2016

**Level One of the Green Schools Program:** Achieved in May 2017

**Level Two of the Green Schools Program:** Achieved in May 2018

**Level Three of the Green Schools Program:** Achieved in May 2018

**Sustaining Green School:** Achieved in

- 2018-19
- 2019-20
- 2022-23

### **Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)**

- Northwood Elementary School achieved a 42% recycling rate, and then increased its recycling rate to 60% in 2018-19.
- At the start of the year kick off, administrators launched a competition to see which grade could waste the least amount of food and keep the cafeteria the cleanest at lunchtime. Rankings were posted and successes celebrated regularly.
- Student Green Team members learned how to sort recyclable materials, and made posters about the benefits of reducing waste and recycling.
- Waste-free lunches were promoted. A cafeteria food share table was set up so students could place unopened packaged foods from the school lunch program for donation to a nonprofit.
- Durable trays and utensils were used in the cafeteria.
- To reduce paper use, classroom handouts were limited, teacher websites were used to post assignments, and double-sided copies were made.
- The Green Team made regular weekly announcements about ways to reduce, reuse, recycle, and rethink consumption and waste.



## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- The Green Team made monthly announcements to share energy conservation tips and facts as well as data on the school's energy use.
- Signs were posted near all equipment to remind students and staff to turn off computers and other equipment when not in use.
- To encourage energy conservation practices, students signed an energy conservation pledge.
- Northwood Elementary became an EPA Energy Star-certified school.
- To conserve energy, Northwood encouraged staff to limit personal appliances in offices and classrooms.
- All light fixtures used fluorescent or LED bulbs.
- Northwood regularly encouraged students and staff to dress appropriately for the weather rather than adjust thermostats.
- Teachers turned off lights in unoccupied spaces, closed windows and doors to keep heat in, and used daylight instead of electric lights when possible.

## Water Conservation (Level Three)

- Water conservation tips and information about the school's water use were shared in the school's newsletter.
- Green Team members posted water conservation signs near all restroom and classroom sinks to encourage students to turn off the water when not in use.
- To protect local waterways, the team organized a pledge campaign for students and staff about litter reduction and how to keep storm drains clear of litter.
- In curriculum, teachers included information about water use and sources in different parts of the world.
- Northwood collected rain water to irrigate school gardens.
- The Green Team made monthly announcements to educate students about the school rain gardens and how they can help keep water clean.
- Students were encouraged to report leaking faucets to school custodians.
- Water efficient fixtures were selected and installed.



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## Sustaining Green School Recognition

Northwood Elementary 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 accomplished this is described below.

### Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- The Green Team shared its 2018-19 waste reduction goal with the school community and educated the community about reducing waste and recycling.
- The Green Team created two videos on how to reduce waste and sort unwanted items correctly at school, and how to waste less
- Energy and water conservation tips were shared with families regularly via email.

### Sustaining Green School 2019-20

- The Green Team created new recycling posters for the lunchroom in September, and worked in the cafeteria to help guide their fellow students to correctly sort materials and to place unopened, packaged food items from the school lunch program aside to donate to OSL, a nonprofit that provides meals to community members in need.
- In October 2019, Green Team students conducted a campaign to encourage composting of pumpkins after Halloween.
- In October 2019, a King County Green Schools Program representative led a waste sort for staff.
- In November 2019, the Green Team conducted a Waste Free Lunch campaign. Students created a Waste Free Lunch menu and shared food waste facts with their peers.
- In December 2019, students watched the video “The Big Sort.”
- In February 2020, students focused on ways they could be kind to the earth, connected to Northwood’s Character Trait at School – Kindness.
- At the end of April 2020, the school virtually celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. Each day of the week centered around a different theme: Monday



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focused on energy conservation, Tuesday on what ways students were grateful for the Earth, Wednesday on showing support for conservation practices by wearing green or blue, Thursday on reducing waste and recycling, and Friday on a mindful neighborhood walk to observe the outdoors.

## Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- 30 Green Team students from second- to fifth-grade, led by teacher Janel Foss and PTA member Marta Prieto Tarazaga, engaged in many projects, including:
  - Creating 3-dimensional posters with actual items glued to them to help students correctly sort garbage, recyclables, and compostables.
  - Making holiday decorations out of empty milk cartons,
  - Serving as bin monitors at lunch time to help students sort.
  - Making announcements every Thursday in the lunchroom, using trivia questions and tips on how to reduce food waste and sort materials.
  - Organizing an Earth Day scavenger hunt to help students understand how to reduce lunchroom waste and conserve resources every day.
  - Planting native wild flowers in raised beds and weeding a hillside.
  - Discussing a joint project with Mercer Island High School.
- The school continued to collect recyclable materials in all classrooms, halls, and offices, to provide reusable trays and compostable containers for portion serving, and to encourage students and staff to bring reusable water bottles from home to fill at water stations.
- To reduce wasted food, students placed uneaten whole fruits and unopened, packaged food items from the school lunch program back on the lunch tray cart at the end of lunch periods.
- Green Team activities were featured in the PTA newsletter, weekly emails to Green Team member families, and district Facebook, Twitter & Instagram sites.
- The district implemented a new initiative to reduce energy use by asking staff to make sure all electronic equipment was unplugged or turned off before school breaks. This initiative resulted in a significant cost savings for the district.