



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Sunny Hills Elementary School

School district: Issaquah

School location: Sammamish

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
September 2010

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

Level Two of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in May 2014

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

Sustaining Green School recognition:
Achieved for....

- 2015-16
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2021-22
- 2022-23

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Sunny Hills achieved a 49% recycling rate.
- Thanks to recycling increases and garbage decreases, the school reduced garbage pick-up from twice per week to once per week.
- Sunny Hills started to collect food scraps and other compostable materials in the lunchroom and staff lounge for transport to Cedar Grove Composting.
- The school formed a staff and student Green Team to lead waste reduction and recycling education. The team created and hung recycling posters and conducted presentations in classrooms and at staff meetings.
- Student Council members made presentations to teach their peers about recycling.



Teachers Jane Ulrich, Cami Przybylski, Kathy Dunn, and Cody Johansen accept King County Earth Heroes at School award in 2014



Student cafeteria recycling monitors learn what items can be recycled and composted





- The Green Team developed a website with skits and PA announcements posted online every two weeks.
- To prepare for lunchroom food scrap collection, teachers conducted an interactive review with their classes and one teacher gave lunchroom presentations.
- Green Team and third-grade students formed a Waste Watchers team to monitor lunchroom bins and assist other students to sort materials.
- Student Waste Watchers were trained by the Green Schools Program about reducing waste, recycling, and composting, and how to sort materials correctly.
- The school promoted Waste-Free Wednesdays to encourage students to reduce wasted food and to bring lunches from home in reusable containers.
- The student council created boxes for each classroom to collect paper used only one side, so students and staff could use the blank sides for notes. Staff reduced paper use by eliminating paper newsletters and making double-sided copies.
- Along with all district schools, the lunchroom eliminated drinking straws and used durable trays that were washed and reused. When it was not possible to use durable trays, the lunchroom used compostable paper trays instead of polystyrene trays.
- In monthly newsletters, information about conservation practices was shared.
- Color coded recycling containers were paired with trash cans in every room.
- Green Team students shared announcements and reminders about what belongs in recycling, composting, and garbage bins.
- Students and staff created mini-video clips with waste reduction and recycling reminders for the school population.



Student Waste Watchers learn from the Green Schools Program why it matters to recycle, and what materials can be reduced, reused, recycled, and composted

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Energy conservation stickers were placed on light switches to remind students and staff to turn off lights when leaving rooms.
- Student jobs were created to ensure that lights and electronics were turned off and blinds were closed to reduce energy consumption.
- Sunny Hills conserved energy by turning off or putting to sleep all electronics that were not in use.



- After-hours activities were centralized in the gym, library and multipurpose room to reduce heating and cooling in unoccupied areas.
- The school installed occupancy sensors in frequently used rooms.
- Staff and students were encouraged to dress appropriately for the weather rather than adjusting the thermostat settings.
- Energy conservation facts, tips, and reminders were shared weekly through e-newsletters, the school's website, and announcements.
- Energy use was monitored twice a year by teacher Cody Johansen.
- Fourth-grade Green Team students created and performed skits to encourage families to turn off their vehicle engines while waiting to pick up students after schools. An anti-idling PowerPoint presentation was shared in each classroom.
- Fifth-grade students competed in an anti-idling poster contest.

Water Conservation (Level Three)

- The Green Team shared water conservation tips and facts during school announcements twice per week, and posted water conservation signs next to classroom sinks.
- School faucets had low-flow aerators installed to conserve water.
- Sunny Hills maintained a native plant garden with drought-resistant plants. The garden was certified as an official wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.
- Fourth-grade classes
 - Received classroom workshops focused on healthy soil and water.
 - Participated in City of Sammamish Healthy Watershed, Healthy World classroom workshops focused on storm water pollution prevention.
 - Completed pollution prevention challenges at home where students tracked pollution prevention actions during a two-week period.
- A speaker from Splash, a Seattle-based international non-profit, shared information with students and staff about water quality and water use in Nepal and Ethiopia.
- At the start of the school year, information about conserving water and preventing water pollution was included in a PowerPoint presentation on school expectations that was shared by all teachers with their classes.
- Before doing laundry, kitchen staff waited until all lunches were finished and all dish rags were ready for washing. Staff ran the staff room dishwasher only when full.



Sustaining Green School recognition

Sunny Hills sustained and built on its Level One through Level Three conservation practices. How the school achieved this each year is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2015-16

- Monthly intercom announcements about conservation practices, including reducing waste and recycling, increased from once each month to once per week.
- Student Waste Watchers helped fellow students sort lunch waste at all three lunch periods instead of only at one or two periods as they did in previous years.
- Green Team students made announcements about Waste-Free Wednesdays in the lunchroom and on the school intercom. The head custodian measured lunchroom waste and updated the Green Team advisors and students on the information.
- The fourth-grade team participated in a water conservation classroom workshop provided by Nature Vision and in a storm water pollution prevention classroom workshop provided by the City of Sammamish.
- The school's garden became a certified native plant garden.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

In fall 2017, with district support and assistance from the Green Schools Program, the cafeteria set up a food share bin for unopened, packaged foods and uneaten whole fruit with inedible skins from the lunch program. Other students helped themselves to items in the food share bin, and the remainder was picked up by Issaquah Food Bank once each week.

Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- In 2018, students attended a King County assembly about how waste reduction and recycling choices impact the planet.
- Announcements about how to sort each day's meal items were made regularly at lunchtime.
- Green Schools Program stickers were placed on recycling, composting, and garbage bins, and the program's energy and water conservation signs were placed by light switches and faucets.



Students received Moments of Greatness wood coins for conservation and other actions completed at school



- To conserve energy, the school set thermostats between 68 to 70 degrees and installed automatic shut-off lights.
- Fourth-grade students continued to participate in the City of Sammamish Healthy Watershed, Healthy World classroom workshops on stormwater pollution prevention.

Sustaining Green School 2021-22

- With leadership from assistant principal Cami Przybylski, third-grade teacher Regan Schildt, fifth-grade teacher Gary Arthur, music teacher Hank Klein, second-grade teacher Jessica Clark, and kindergarten teacher Julie Sanelli, classroom presentations were made to invite students to join the Green Team and Waste Watchers groups, and students in those groups helped sustain Green School practices at Sunny Hills.
- The team created and showed videos school-wide to teach students about reducing waste, sorting recyclable and compostable materials, conserving energy and water, and other conservation practices.
- Waste Watchers monitored cafeteria sorting stations to help their fellow students sort correctly.
- Moments of Greatness buttons were presented to students who did a good job recycling in the lunchroom.
- Each class received a lesson about sustainable practices and was invited to create posters with their pledges to reduce food waste, refill durable water bottles, save energy, save water, or other conservation practices. Pledge posters were hung in the lunchroom.

Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- With leadership from a larger staff group than in 2021-22 - assistant principal Cami Przybylski, third-grade teacher Regan Schildt, fifth-grade teacher Gary Arthur, music teacher Hank Klein, second-grade teacher Jessica Clark, first-grade teacher Lauren Triggs, fourth-grade teacher Lisa Ross, and kindergarten teacher Kayley Apman - students were invited to join the Green Team.



- The 80-member Green Team divided into several groups to help improve Green School practices at Sunny Hills.
 - Waste Watchers used announcements, a slide show, and an interactive game to help fellow students learn how to sort materials at lunch. Waste Watchers also monitored sorting stations regularly.
 - Energy Conservation group posted Turn Off Lights signs in classrooms and make regular announcements about why conserving energy matters.
 - Pollution Prevention group picked up litter on school grounds in May, and created posters to remind students where to place garbage.
 - Fall Gardening group planted flowers on the school grounds with guidance from a retired teacher volunteer.
 - Spring Gardening group helped each class plant vegetables in school garden beds, weed, water, and harvest vegetables.
- Staff leaders created Good On the Other Side (GOOS) boxes for classrooms, so students could use the blank sides of paper for notes.
- Student Council members and Green Team students made announcements at lunch the week before Earth Day to encourage students to sign pledges to take care of the Earth. During Earth Week in April, students signed posters with their pledges.

Award

The staff Green Team of Cody Johansen, Kathy Dunn, Cami Przybylski and Jane Ulrich received a 2014 King County Earth Heroes at School award for their leadership establishing daily conservation practices at Sunny Hills.