



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

Tahoma Elementary School

School District: Tahoma

School Location: Maple Valley

Began participating in the Green Schools Program: September 2017

Note: The former school on this school's property earned Level One (waste reduction and recycling), Level Two (energy conservation), and Level Three (water conservation and pollution prevention) recognition in previous years.



Students participated in a school litter clean-up to prevent stormwater pollution.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18:
Achieved in June 2018

Sustaining Green School 2018-19:
Achieved in June 2019

Sustaining Green School 2021-22:
Achieved in June 2022

Sustaining Green School 2022-23:
Achieved in June 2023

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Tahoma Elementary School increased its recycling rate from 49% to 61%.
- Green Team members regularly monitored lunchroom waste stations and assisted students with proper waste sorting.
- Students created and posted signs listing what can and cannot be recycled and composted throughout the school.
- The school made weekly announcements to promote waste-free Wednesdays where students were encouraged to reduce food waste and plastic packaging waste during lunch.
- The Green Team emptied all classroom recycling, taking note of any contamination. Recommendations and recognition was then shared with teachers and students.



Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Signs were posted near all light switches to encourage staff and students to turn off lights when not in use.
- Student monitors in each classroom ensured all energy conservation practices, such as closing windows in air-conditioned and heated rooms and using natural daylight when possible, were followed.

Water Conversation (Level Three)

- Students posted signs near all sinks as a reminder to conserve water by turning off the faucet when not in use.
- To encourage students and staff to never litter, the school made announcements explaining how litter contributes to water pollution.

Sustaining Green School recognition

Tahoma Elementary sustained and built on its Level One waste reduction and recycling practices, Level Two energy conservation practices, and Level Three water conservation strategies. Described below is how the school did this each year.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- The Green Team created educational videos to encourage students to sort items correctly to reduce contamination in recycling bins.
- Classrooms with zero contamination in their recycling bins were recognized with Green Club awards.

Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- Green Team students collaborated with the student newspaper to include tips, facts, and updates in the newspaper about waste reduction, recycling, energy and water conservation, and Green Team projects. The newspaper articles helped the Green Team to recruit new members.
- Third-grade students learned about the life cycle of salmon, water conservation, and water pollution prevention practices. They also received a classroom presentation from the Issaquah fish hatchery.



- Fourth-grade students visited Shadow Lake Nature Preserve to learn about water ecosystems, water conservation and pollution prevention.
- Five Green Team students from each grade level monitored classroom sorting bins and shared reminders on waste reduction and recycling practices with their classes.
- In the lunchroom, posters with sample items were displayed to help students understand how to sort garbage, recyclable materials, and compostable materials.
- The Green Team made and displayed posters with tips on how to be green.
- The Green Team encouraged students to take the People. Power. Planet pledge to reduce waste and save energy, and 455 students completed the pledge.
- Signs were displayed throughout the school to remind students and staff to turn off lights and equipment when not in use.
- Many classrooms used natural lighting during the day to reduce electricity use.
- Green Team students conducted power patrols by visiting empty classrooms to ensure lights and unused equipment were turned off.
- Students conducted a litter patrol to clean up the school campus and to prevent stormwater pollution in November 2018.
- The school maintenance staff managed a rain garden and displayed signs near the garden to help visitors learn about the environmental benefits of rain gardens.
- Water bottle filling stations were used to prevent water waste from traditional water fountains and to reduce waste from disposable plastic water bottles.
- To reduce waste, the school used bulk dispensers and reusable trays in the lunchroom.

Sustaining Green School 2021-22

- School staff advocated re-starting collection of compostable materials in the lunchroom.
- Green Team students shared their knowledge about composting and its benefits with fellow students, and volunteered to monitor lunchroom recycling bins.
- Green Team visited K-3rd grade students to talk about recycling and created an interactive activity to help students sort waste correctly.
- During Earth Week, the Green Team educated fellow students about energy conservation through videos, fun challenges, and the People Power Planet website.



Sustaining Green School 2022-23

- Green Team students in the fourth and fifth grades volunteered to join and attend a zero hour Green Team meeting once each week, and they decided to make waste reduction and recycling education a main focus of their activities.
- Green Team students visited K-3 classrooms to educate them about recycling. They showed what items can be recycled and invited students to identify which items can be recycled and which should be placed in garbage bins.
- Green Team students created posters for the lunchroom and classrooms about waste reduction and recycling.
- Staff received emails and heard announcements about conservation practices at staff meetings, and the school's family newsletter included information about conservation and Green Team activities.
- A school bulletin board devoted to Green Team activities, with updates and Green Team student photos.
- For Earth Week, the Green Team used the People Power Planet website to help create challenges regarding energy and water conservation. One day included a challenge to conserve water by turning off faucets when not in use and picking up trash before it pollutes waterways.