



## Carl Sandburg Elementary / Discovery Community School

**School district:** Lake Washington

**School location:** Kirkland

**Began participating in the Green Schools Program:**  
October 2007

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

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

**Level Three of the Green Schools Program:**  
Achieved in May 2014

**Sustaining Green School:**  
Achieved in

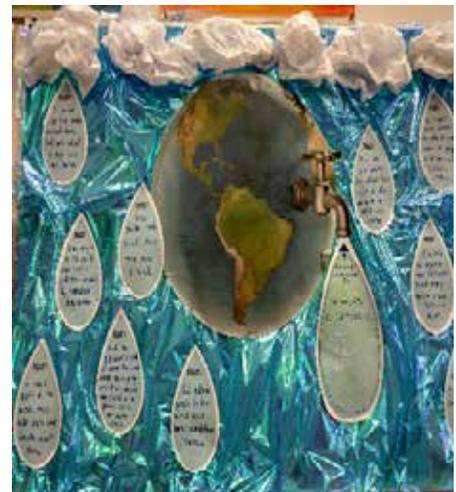
- 2014-15
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20

### Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- The school achieved a 72 percent recycling rate by educating students and employees about reducing waste and recycling, placing recycling bins in classrooms and cafeteria, using durable trays in the cafeteria, and collecting compostable materials in the cafeteria.
- The student Green Team, called The Earth's Helpers Club, created short videos to help educate the school about recycling and composting practices.



Susan Vossler, parent volunteer, receives King County Earth Heroes award in April 2011



Parent volunteers created display to help students learn about water conservation and pollution prevention



Bulletin board about Earth Week events



# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- The Earth's Helpers Club conducted informal classroom recycling bin audits and gave recommendations about recycling practices based on their results.
- The school held a waste-free Wednesday competition to raise awareness about waste reduction. Students measured garbage and tracked how much garbage was diverted from the landfill.
- The school participated in the King County elementary school assembly program and classroom workshops.
- Recycling bins were set out at all school events such as the carnival.
- Students and parents placed recycling stickers on all recycling bins, and Signs were placed on photocopier machines to promote double-sided photocopying.
- Student and parent volunteers created a bulletin board listing what materials can be recycled and composted.
- They conducted classroom presentations about why recycling and composting are important, what materials can be recycled and composted, and ways to reduce waste at lunch.
- Students created signs about reducing waste and recycling that were displayed in the lunchroom and throughout the school.
- Articles were written for the PTA newsletter and presentations were made at PTA and staff meetings about waste reduction and recycling.
- "Green Tips" were placed in the monthly school newsletter.
- The school newspaper was sent by email saving one ream of paper per week.
- A Washington Department of Ecology award and PTSA funding helped purchase reusable party ware for classroom parties and environmental books for library.
- In 2012 the Earth's Helpers Club sponsored an electronics recycling event.



Students Green Team present Green School goals and initiatives during tour of the school



Parents present Green School goals and initiatives during tour



- Parent volunteers helped monitor lunchroom waste and recycling stations throughout the school year to encourage proper sorting.
- During Earth Week, the student council led a schoolwide litter clean-up.
- The school collected energy bar wrappers to be recycled through TerraCycle's Cliff Bar Wrapper Brigade. TerraCycle uses the collected materials to make new products.



Free of weeds and herbicides by volunteering to weed

## Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Energy conservation practices decreased school energy use by 25 percent and received recognition from Lake Washington School District.
- The Earth's Helpers Club signed an energy conservation pledge and placed stickers on all light switches to encourage turning off lights in unoccupied rooms.
- The Earth's Helpers Club promoted energy conservation actions, including turning off lights and electronic equipment when not in use, through classroom presentations, bulletin boards, newsletters, and staff reminders.
- The school resource conservation manager installed energy saving devices such as vending misers, compact fluorescent bulbs and occupancy sensors.
- The school established a "no-idle zone" in its parking lot in 2010.
- In 2012 the school moved into a new energy-efficient building featuring geothermal energy for heating, solar panels, low-energy water heaters and light fixtures, occupancy sensors, and energy-saving concrete wall insulation.
- The Earth's Helpers Club created a Power Point to share with all students the new green features, including the energy-and water-efficient systems.
- Guest speakers from Puget Sound Energy and other organizations provided presentations on energy conservation and energy use impacts on salmon.
- Doors to classrooms were kept closed to maintain heat.
- Signs were posted around the school to encourage energy conservation.
- In conjunction with Earth Day, students made announcements to promote energy conservation.



- Notices regarding the school's energy and water conservation practices were shared in the parent newsletter in winter and spring of 2017.

## **Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention (Level Three)**

- The Earth Helper's Club created a presentation to educate students and staff on water conservation. The presentation included a pledge to report leaks and use water wisely.
- The new facility's outdoor landscaping included native plants and a rain garden.
- Second-grade students learned about the water cycle, where their drinking water comes from, and the importance of conserving water. Several students from each class shared what they learned during morning PA announcements.
- Guest speakers from environmental education group Nature Vision educated students on water conservation and healthy watersheds.
- The school's water use and at-home water conservation tips were shared through the school's newsletter.
- The school participated in the Fix a Leak Week where classrooms checked sinks and drinking fountains for leaks.
- Parent volunteers weeded designated sections of the school ground, which allowed the school to remain the district's only herbicide-free school.
- Throughout the year, students learned about water conservation practices via signs posted around the school and lunch time activities.
- Parent and student volunteers initiated a service-learning and partnership opportunity with the non-profit H2O for Life. This campaign educated the school community about global water issues and raised funds for schools around the world with limited access to clean water.
- Parent volunteers created a bulletin board to promote water conservation education and to encourage students to participate in a penny drive to raise funds for the school's H2O for Life sister school in Uganda.
- During lunch, to educate students about the importance of access to clean drinking water, parent volunteers demonstrated how water purification systems work.

## **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 2014-15**

- The student Green Team researched and promoted the use of alternatives to polystyrene serving-ware (also known as Styrofoam) in the cafeteria.
- Students participated in a Litter Safari on Earth Day to collect and dispose of litter.
- In March 2015, the school campus was certified as a National Wildlife Federation wildlife habitat.

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

- Water purification system demonstrations took place during school lunches to educate students about the importance of accessing clean drinking water.
- The school shared announcements promoting at-home water conservation practices in the school and PTSA newsletters.
- Students completed a take-home water conservation pledge to increase water conservation at home, at school, and in their community.

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

- The school renewed its commitment to maintain an herbicide free environment with monthly volunteer work parties to weed, plant, and fertilize school grounds.
- To prevent water pollution downstream, students initiated monthly litter cleanups and rain garden maintenance.
- The school music teacher worked with second-grade students to plan a musical performance called Assignment: EARTH during Earth week.

## **Sustaining Green School 2018-19**

- Green Team students helped set up a calm space for students to enjoy as they continued to work on sustaining conservation practices and improving student life around the school.
- To maintain an herbicide-free school, the Green Team weeded the school garden and outdoor commons area.



- In spring 2019, the school participated in a pilot Food Share/Donation Program whereby students could place unopened, packaged items from the school lunch program in a Share Bin for other students to take. Leftover Share Bin items were donated to a nonprofit food distribution organization. Students helped to record quantities donated and to move leftover foods from the Share Bin to the refrigerator.

## Sustaining Green School 2019-20

- In 2019-20, the school provided a stipend for Erin Subcleff to create, organize, and manage a student Green Team. She commented, “the biggest thing is how much enthusiasm there is from the student body. We had to be creative in assigning responsibilities. So many students wanted to be involved! Two different classes took over Green Team activities each month. The students really wanted to do things to help the environment and the school.”
- 125 Green Team members managed the school’s TerraCycle Cliff Bar recycling program and other activities.
- In February 2020, students participated in an assembly and Healthy Habitats and Garbology workshops provided by King County.
- In 2019-20, parent volunteers and the principal visited the lunchroom to announce guidelines for sorting recyclable and compostable materials.
- Plastic disposable utensils were replaced with durable utensils.
- The school reduced food waste by inviting students to use the food share table to place and take unopened packaged items and whole fruits. Each week parent volunteers donated leftover share table items to the local nonprofit Hopelink.
- To reduce hazardous waste, the school used green cleaning products and maintained herbicide-free grounds. Student and parent volunteers weeded school grounds at monthly Herbicide-Free Work Parties.
- Energy conservation from 2014 to September 2019 resulted in a savings of \$57,510 for the school building and 116 metric tons of carbon reduction.



Bulletin board showing what can be recycled at school



- The school's solar PV (photovoltaics) produced 9,940 Kilo Watt-hours, equivalent to electricity use of about 10 homes in the area. The school's [Washington Sustainable School Protocol](#) score was 55.10 points higher than the minimum required for state funds.
- The campus landscaping was designed with all native, drought-tolerant plants. Water use decreased from 600 to 400 Centum Cubic Feet (CCF) – an 11% total reduction and a 32% per capita reduction since 2013-14.
- The campus maintained three rain gardens designed for stormwater treatment. Educational signs were posted in the gardens to inform the community how the gardens support water quality. The school also placed signs around the school about water conservation.

## Awards

- In spring 2020, the school received the U.S. Green Ribbon School award for excellence in all three Pillars (Reducing Environmental Impacts and Costs; Health and Wellness; and Environmental and Sustainability Education).
- In spring 2019, the school received the Washington State Green School Leader award in Pillar 3 (Environmental and Sustainability Education).
- The school received a Green School Leader award for Reducing Environmental Impact and Costs (Pillar 1 of the U.S. Green Ribbon School awards) in 2014 from Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- The Earth's Helpers Club received a King County Earth Heroes at School Award in 2013.
- The school won district recognition for decreasing energy use by 25 percent.
- Parent volunteer Susan Vossler received a King County Earth Heroes at School Award in 2011.
- The school received a Seed Award from the Washington Department of Ecology.