



## Islander Middle School

**School district:** Mercer Island

**School location:** Mercer Island

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

**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 2015

**Sustaining Green School:** Achieved in

- 2017-18
- 2019-20

### Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- The student green team, Gators Go Green, launched a lunchroom recycling program in spring 2008 and promoted the program with a lunchtime assembly, daily announcements, and contests.
- Classroom recycling bins and signs were added throughout the school.
- Students volunteered to teach others about what is and isn't recyclable, and parent monitors helped in the lunchroom to support student efforts.
- Kitchen staff began to collect compostable materials in fall 2010 for transport to a regional composting facility.



During Earth Week 2015, students pledged to recycle, conserve water, and plant trees



Students recycle at Islander



Recycling bins in school lunchroom



King County Green Schools Program

# Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- Collection of compostable materials reduced the school's waste by 25 percent.
- The faculty received a presentation about how to reduce paper use.
- At a faculty meeting, teacher Cary Spitz presented a composting video and education materials used to educate students about composting and how to collect compostable materials at school.
- For two weeks after initiating collection of compostable materials, parent volunteers and staff members helped monitor the new program.
- Parent Kenlyn Emerson and Gators Go Green educated staff and students about problems associated with polystyrene trays. Using models provided by the King County Green Schools Program, the team compiled data for the district to compare the costs and other benefits of durable versus disposable trays.
- Students created an education campaign to share facts about the waste created from purchasing and using disposable trays and the benefits of using durables.
- The school received a grant from Washington State Department of Ecology to help purchase durable trays. After polystyrene trays were replaced with durable trays, the volume of lunchroom garbage was reduced by 50 percent. It was estimated that this switch saved the school about \$2,000 per year.
- Students, with guidance and support from parent Kenlyn Emerson, teachers Cary Spitz and Alasia Heinritz, and principal Mary Jo Budzius, set goals to improve recycling in the lunchroom. Green Team members signed up to monitor lunchroom waste stations and assist students with sorting their waste.
- In November 2014, the leadership class created a Wednesday Morning Live video on how to sort recyclable materials correctly. In February 2015, the leadership class created and displayed waste-free lunch posters to encourage students to take what they eat and eat what they take and to use durable containers for lunch from home.



Student-made poster shows compostable items

## **Energy Conservation (Level Two)**

- The Green Team placed “turn off the lights” stickers above light switches throughout the school.
- Leadership students created daily live morning announcements about energy conservation that were played on the school television.
- Mrs. Riccio’s students created posters to display throughout the school to promote proper dress for the season and limit adjustment of the thermostat.
- The district checked mechanical equipment twice per year, installed energy-efficient LED lights in the gym, and provided a more energy-efficient boiler for the school.
- Leadership students led an Earth Spirit week focused on conserving energy, recycling, and reducing pollution. During that week, students were asked to wear a different color based on each day’s conservation theme.
- The Green Team regularly patrolled classrooms for incidents of energy waste. Results and recommendations were shared with students and staff members.
- To conserve energy, summer programs were limited to one wing of the school.

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

- Signs encouraging students to turn off the water while soaping hands were placed next to sinks in all school bathrooms.
- Announcements were shared regularly over the PA system to encourage students and staff to conserve water.
- District staff installed low-flow valves when repairs to water fixtures were needed.
- Eighth-grade science students created Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about an environmental issue of their choice. The PSAs, most of which focused on water conservation, were shown to the whole school community.
- For Earth Day, students signed conservation pledges, including pledges to conserve water, which were collected and displayed as a poster in the school.
- All eighth-grade science classes completed a unit on natural resources and discussed carbon footprints, water conservation and soil erosion. The sixth-grade science classes also learned about ecosystems.

- At all school sinks, items were washed with tubs of water and sponges instead of running the faucet continuously.
- To conserve water, the dishwasher in the staff lounge was only run with full loads.
- Drought-tolerant native plants were used in the school landscaping.
- Watering was completed in the early morning and in the evening, and sprinklers were checked by facilities staff regularly to ensure that they water the lawns and not sidewalks, driveways, and gutters.

## **Sustaining Green School**

Islander Middle 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 is described below.

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

The Green Team began collecting data on the number of plastic bottles found around campus. Students used the bottles to create an artistic display which included statistics and information about waste reduction and recycling.

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

- In September 2019, during Gator Time (a daily 30-minute advisory period), all students watched a video about lunchtime expectations at Islander Middle School related to correct sorting of lunchtime recyclable and compostable materials. Posters about correct sorting were displayed in the lunchroom.
- Through morning announcements and posters, students are invited to join the Green Team.
- Every Day is Earth Day was celebrated on May 6, 2020. During Gator Time, each advisory class watched a video about the history of Earth Day and other videos featuring youth environmental leaders. Teachers asked students to write about the impact humans have on natural resources and led students in discussing conservation practices and how school and work facility closures due to COVID-19 impacted consumption and resource conservation practices.



King County Green Schools Program

# *Success Story*

*Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink*

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- Green Team students met with science teacher Miranda Hayes-Francois to discuss environmental problems at school and on Mercer Island. Students proposed solutions to each challenge.
- Single-use water bottles were eliminated from the school in September 2019.

## **Award**

Islander Middle School received a King County Earth Heroes at School award in 2009.