



Mercer Island High School

School district: Mercer Island

School location: Mercer Island

Began participating in the Green Schools Program:
June 2010

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

Level Two of the Green Schools Program:
Achieved in April 2012

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

Sustaining Green School 2017-18:
Achieved in May 2018

Sustaining Green School 2018-19:
Achieved in May 2019

Sustaining Green School 2019-20:
Achieved in December 2020



Teacher Jamie Cooke receives King County Earth Hero at School award



Students sort their recyclable and compostable materials in lunchroom

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Mercer Island High School maintained a recycling rate of 68 percent.
- The number of lunchroom garbage cans was reduced from more than thirty to eight thanks to collection of recyclable and compostable materials during lunch.
- In an advisory class period, students were taught how to properly sort lunch waste. The lesson included a video about what happens to recyclable and compostable materials in King County.
- During ninth-grade orientation, students were introduced to the school's green practices and policies.



King County Green Schools Program

Success Story

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle • Rethink

- Disposable plastic utensils and all polystyrene (Styrofoam) plates, cups, and containers were replaced with compostable alternatives.
- In 2013, the school held a Green Day where 25 leadership students wore green and visited each lunch table to help students properly sort their lunch waste.
- Students donated old and unused computers at a school-wide computer drive. Interconnection, a local non-profit, collected and refurbished the computers and accessories and distributed them to underserved schools.
- The Green Team created a video about how to limit paper towel usage at school.
- In 2015, student Green Team members attended the YMCA environmental symposium and brought back ideas for future school projects.
- To reduce single-use plastic bottles, the school retrofitted a water fountain to make it possible to re-fill durable water bottles. The new hydration station tracked the number of bottles that were filled. In the first four days after installation, the station filled 1,000 bottles.
- In 2012, a cell phone recycling campaign was initiated, and more than 100 cell phones were collected. The cell phones were sent to companies to be refurbished, reused, or sustainably reprocessed to reuse the metals in each phone.
- The school's paper reduction plan included student notebooks created from paper previously used only on one side. One-sided paper collection bins were distributed to departments that did not have double-sided printers.
- The Green Team created and posted new instructional waste reduction and sorting signs in the cafeteria, classrooms, and hallways.
- The school collected chip bags to mail to Terra-Cycle, a company that uses those materials to create purses and other products.
- To reduce paper use, all freshman and sophomores were given iPads in 2014-15.
- Teachers participated in workshops that encouraged posting handouts online and accepting electronic submission of student work to reduce printing.



Water bottle refilling station at the school

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- A competition to reduce energy use in classrooms included posting signs near light switches to remind teachers and students to turn off the lights in unoccupied rooms and above copy machines and computers to remind the school community to turn off equipment when not in use and at the end of each day. The number of rooms with lights turned off after school increased by more than 10 percent.
- Energy conservation tips for the classroom were shared with staff members at three meetings throughout the school year.
- A PTSA newsletter article brought attention to the problem of idling cars waiting to pick up students, and “No Idling” signs were posted in the front of the school.
- School announcements included weekly Green Tips, many of which were about energy conservation.
- During Earth Week 2012, students created a video about how to conserve energy.
- All light bulbs were replaced with LED efficiency bulbs.

Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention (Level Three)

- The Green Team co-hosted a discussion on water quality with Prakash Sharma, director of Splash-Nepal, who led the initiative to secure clean water for every public school in Kathmandu.
- On World Water Day, an announcement was made over the school bulletin and a video was played in many classrooms to promote discussions about water scarcity, water treatment, water use, and water conservation.
- Water conservation tips were shared in the school bulletin.
- The school conducted a water assessment in every bathroom in the building.
- District staff installed low-flow valves when repairs to water fixtures were needed.
- Students and staff members were encouraged to report leaks to maintenance staff.

- During lunch, over 150 students signed a pledge not to purchase bottled water and were given Green Team reusable water bottles.
- During Earth Week 2015, water conservation information was displayed and water flavoring tablets were distributed for reusable water bottles.
- A rain garden with interpretive signage was installed in front of the school.
- Outdoor watering was completed in the early morning or evening, and facilities staff checked sprinklers regularly to ensure they water the lawns, and not sidewalks, driveways, or gutters.

Sustaining Green School Recognition

A Mercer Island High 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 built on its Level One through Three achievements each year is described below.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- The Green Team made video about waste reduction which was shown during morning announcements.
- Students created informational signs about the importance of conserving natural resources and displayed them in hallways throughout the school.

Sustaining Green School 2018-19

- Students met with Principal Puckett to discuss recycling and composting strategies in the lunchroom and at sports events.
- The Green Team sent out a survey to all students for ideas about recycling.
- The school started working with the YMCA Earth Service Corps representative. They focused on the school goals and to educate students on what other green schools are doing to increase awareness and sustainability.
- Green Team members shared Earth Day lessons about composting and recycling during Earth Week.

Sustaining Green School 2019-20

- In September 2019, the Green Team club was promoted through PA announcements, at a lunch fair where the club had a table, and at a staff meeting.
- At the start of the 2019-20 school year, Green Team advisors asked teachers to remind students about best practices for waste sorting. Posters were displayed in the cafeteria to show students where different items should be sorted.
- In February 2020, the Green Team created posters to show sustainable actions in the Mercer Island community, and discussed single-use plastic water bottle use on campus with the athletic trainer, coaches, and an assistant principal.
- In January 2020, a Microsoft employee presented to students about climate change and sustainability.
- In fall 2020, the Green Team created a video consisting of interviews of various on-campus clubs about what they do to be more sustainable. In fall 2020, the Green Team added information to the video about how to be sustainable at home. The video included a clip about sustainability from Sounders player Jordan Morris.

Awards

- Jamie Cooke, teacher and Green Team advisor, received a King County Earth Heroes at School award in April 2011.
- Mercer Island School District was one of 42 districts in Washington to receive an award to implement infrastructure and building system improvements to yield energy operational cost savings. The grant was used to help purchase new lighting, boilers, and central boiler controls in the school.