Lake Wilderness Elementary School

School District: Tahoma

School Location: Maple Valley

Began participating in the Green Schools Program: March 2008

Level One of the Green Schools Program: Achieved in December 2009

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

Level Three of the Green Schools Program: Achieved in May 2012


Sustaining Green School 2015-16: Achieved in May 2016

Sustaining Green School 2016-17: Achieved in May 2017

Sustaining Green School 2017-18: Achieved in May 2018

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Level One)

- Lake Wilderness Elementary maintained a recycling rate of 58 percent.
- The lunchroom switched to reusable durable utensils.
- The monthly volume of food scraps and food soiled paper collected and sent to a regional composting facility rather than the landfill increased from 4.2 cubic yards in 2009 to 12.6 cubic yards in 2012.
- The school held a classroom competition to see which classroom had the best one-sided paper reuse box holder decorated with recyclable materials. The winner was announced over the school PA system.
- Lake Wilderness received the King County Schools Program waste reduction and recycling assembly and follow-up workshops.
- PTSA volunteers and custodians monitored the lunchroom disposal stations and helped students sort recyclable and compostable materials. Kindergarten classes were included in the program to help start good habits early.
The Green Team created and shared a paper recycling video with all classes. The parent newsletter was sent electronically, saving approximately 20,000 pieces of paper annually. Teachers eliminated weekly letters to parents, saving 35,000 pieces of paper each school year. Each teacher was limited to 15,000 copies per year to reduce paper waste. Most teachers did not use their entire allotment of paper copies. Starting in 2012, foil juice pouches were collected and sent to Terra Cycle, a company that uses those materials to make new products. PTSA volunteers helped students sort juice pouches, which earns the school points for purchases. The school recycled 1,000 pouches in its first week of collection. Recycling containers were added to the lunchroom for milk cartons, juice boxes, plastic bottles and aluminum cans. The Green Team ensured that containers for collection of recyclable and compostable materials labeled with stickers listing what can and can’t be recycled were placed in all classrooms, staff rooms, and shared spaces. Students created a presentation and video about lunchroom recycling and teachers shared them with all students at the beginning of the year. Announcements were sent every week to remind students and employees what can and cannot be collected for recycling and composting. The school holds weekly waste-free Wednesdays where students are encouraged to bring reusable food containers, utensils, and water bottles and limit disposable packaging. Students received green “Paw Prints” when they brought a waste-free lunch which could be turned in to earn a prize.

Energy Conservation (Level Two)

- Students placed “Turn Off Lights” stickers on all light switches.
- Staff and students participated in “unplugged Fridays” to conserve energy.
- To promote energy conservation, students made regular announcements over the PA system about turning off lights in unoccupied rooms.
- Students made and hung posters explaining how turning off lights helps salmon.
- Several staff members regularly checked closets and other rooms to make sure lights were turned off when not needed.
The Green Team displayed energy conservation stickers in all classrooms, offices, and shared spaces.

Students conducted Power Patrols to monitor energy waste and, based on their observations, sent energy conservation reminders to teachers about ways to save energy.

Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention (Level Three)

- Frequent morning announcements were made to students and staff about water conservation, including reminders to turn off water when soaping up hands at school and home.
- Third-grade students went on a field trip to Landsburg Dam as part of their Land and Water Unit.
- Fifth-grade science students performed perk tests to determine the best location for a rain garden. The new garden featuring native, drought-tolerant plants was installed in 2012-13.
- Signs reminding students and staff to turn off the faucet when not in use and to report leaks were placed above school sinks.
- Two restrooms were remodeled in 2011-12 with low-flow toilets and faucets.
- Students and staff were encouraged to report water problems, such as leaking faucets or drinking fountains, to the head custodian.
- The new school facility was installed with motion activated sinks to help conserve water. The school’s water use was monitored throughout the school year by building manager Gina Castagna.
- The Green Team conducted a campaign on how plastic bags pollute the ocean. The campaign encouraged the community to use durable bags.

Sustaining Green School recognition

- Lake Wilderness Elementary was recognized as a Sustaining Green School by sustaining and building 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 school participated in the People, Power, Planet Program (PPP) offered by McKinstry, the district’s resource conservation management company. Students and staff made energy conservation announcements, conducted classroom energy audits, and reduced energy by turning off lights and electronic equipment when not in use.
- The school displayed energy conservation successes on a PPP board.

Sustaining Green School 2015-16

- The school continued to participate in the PPP program to reduce energy use, earning 31 percent power points by conducting energy patrols and promoting turning off lights in unoccupied rooms and electronics when not in use.
- Students collected 692 energy conservation pledges from the community.
- The school received a USAgain Bin to recycle unwanted clothing. The new program was promoted in the school newsletter for parents.

Sustaining Green School 2016-17

- The school continued to participate in the PPP program, earning power points by reminding teachers to power down electronics and close blinds at the end of the day.
- The school created Spanish and Japanese videos showing how preschool classes learned to recycle. The Green Team learned the PPP pledge in Spanish and English.
- Lake Wilderness set up a reuse bin for teachers to place unwanted construction paper and office items which can be reused by other staff members.
- Green Team students participated in the district’s first student Sustainability Summit in March 2017. Green Team students learned how to properly sort items in recycling, compost, and garbage bins. Students brainstormed ways to help reduce the school’s environmental footprint and send less garbage to the landfill.

Sustaining Green School 2017-18

- To prevent air pollution and reduce emissions, the Green Team conducted a no-idling campaign. Notices were sent to parents and student volunteers created and held up signs during pick-up time to inform drivers of the no-idling rules.
• Green Team students collaborated with the Maple Valley Lions Club to conduct outreach to other schools and local businesses to discourage the use of straws in the Maple Valley community.

For more information about this school’s conservation achievements and participation in the Green Schools Program, contact:

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