



# Sustaining Green Schools

## Best Practices Guide

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August 2022

# Overview of King County Green Schools Program

King County Green Schools Program serves K-12 public and private schools and school districts throughout King County (except in the City of Seattle). The program's vision is that schools and districts will engage their students and staff in learning about sustainability and practicing resource conservation in their schools, homes, and communities.

## Benefits for participating schools

- **Assistance.** King County Green Schools Program staff provide [assistance and guidance](#).
- **Resources.** The program provides information, tools, indoor recycling bins, and signs.
- **Student learning and leadership.** The program offers guidance to student teams engaged in sustainability education and action. Students learn about resource conservation and develop leadership skills as they take action in their schools, homes, and communities. Action-oriented environmental education engages students, offers meaningful community service experience, and can improve learning and test scores.
- **Cost savings.** Conservation practices can save money in addition to protecting the environment and engaging your school community in learning and action.
- **Recognition.** Strengthen student, staff, and community ownership and pride through school and district [recognition](#). Student teams also can earn recognition: See [Elementary school Green Team recognition](#) and [Secondary school Green Team recognition](#).

## Use this Best Practices Guide to:

- Find resources for education, outreach, advocacy, and action.
- Learn how to achieve *Sustaining Green School* recognition each year.

## The King County Green Schools Program can help *with*:

- Student and employee education.
- Project planning, including guidance for student teams.
- Resources and tools, including signs.
- Connecting to school district staff who work on curriculum, food services, maintenance and operations, resource conservation, and transportation.
- Achieving recognition.

**Participating schools:** Email [GreenSchools@kingcounty.gov](mailto:GreenSchools@kingcounty.gov) to request assistance.

# Sustaining Green School recognition

Schools that have received recognition for Level One, Level Two, and Level Three are eligible for Sustaining Green School recognition. A Sustaining Green School maintains and builds on its Level One, Two, and Three education and practices. Schools can earn this recognition each year.

To be recognized as a Sustaining Green School, fill out the recognition form linked on [this page](#).

## Sustaining Green School recognition requires your school to:

- Maintain a school team. Include at least one staff member. Student members or student teams are strongly encouraged, but not required for recognition.
- Tell your school community that your school is participating in the Green Schools Program.
- Continue education and actions from previous program levels (Level One - waste reduction and recycling; Level Two - energy conservation; and Level Three - water conservation and pollution prevention). *(See page 5 for links to these best practices guides.)*
- Complete one new activity or project, in any resource conservation area -- waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, water conservation and pollution prevention, healthy schools, transportation, or green building. *(See page 5 for links to best practices guides for each area.)*  
The activity or project can include education, outreach, advocacy for systems change, or practices or policies in your school, district, or a community beyond your school.
- Share your actions and successes with your school community.

*To receive program assistance, your school does not need to work toward recognition, and your school may focus on any resource conservation area.*

**Each school year** your school earns recognition at this level, you will receive:

- an **electronic icon** for websites and newsletters.
- an updated **success story** on the Green Schools Program website.
  - See [success stories](#) to find your school's story and learn what other schools have done.
- a **Sustaining Green School** ribbon *(with the school year in which it achieved recognition)* to place on your Green Schools banner. (See banner sample below.)



## Green Teams

A Green Team is a group of school community members who work together on education and action for sustainability. Green Teams may include students, teachers, custodians, administrators, family, or community volunteers. The team can be any size, and can be a stand-alone group or class, or a part of another club or organization such as the Associated Student Body (ASB).

If your school is participating in the Green Schools Program, your student team is eligible to receive program help with project planning, trainings, and resources. Student teams can earn recognition: See [Elementary school Green Team recognition](#) and [Secondary school Green Team recognition](#).

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Green Team Guide: Strategies for Success</a>	Tips on how to set up and maintain Green Teams.
<a href="#">Elementary school Green Teams</a> <a href="#">Secondary school Green Teams</a>	Assistance, workshops, project guides, resources, and recognition offered by the program for elementary school student teams or middle and high school student teams.

## Education, outreach, advocacy, and action

Education and outreach are keys to sustainability. Students at every grade level can learn about and promote sustainability and conservation of natural resources, gain volunteer and leadership experience, and take action in their schools, districts, homes, and communities.

Students also have opportunities to: (1) influence systems change (focused on the whole and not only the parts) by partnering with others to understand and address the causes of a problem and by advocating for changes to policies, practices, laws, institutions, and social norms; and (2) help build the transition to a more equitable and low-carbon circular economy where materials and resources are conserved, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, and green jobs are created.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">King County Programs for Educators</a>	Educational resources, including free classroom workshops for grades 1 – 12.
<a href="#">Sample recycling announcements</a> <a href="#">Energy conservation announcements</a> <a href="#">Water conservation announcements</a>	Use or revise these announcements to regularly remind your school community about waste reduction, recycling, energy conservation, and water conservation.
<a href="#">Waste reduction and recycling facts</a> <a href="#">Energy conservation facts</a> <a href="#">Water conservation facts</a>	Use these facts in announcements, assemblies, cafeteria, newsletters, emails, social media, and school website to regularly educate your school community about recycling, conserving energy, and conserving water.

## Best practices for sustainability: Resources and tools

For Sustaining Green School recognition, schools may select any sustainability area in which to complete an activity or project. The program’s Best Practices Guides offer resources and tools as well as a variety of options for education, outreach, advocacy, and action. Based on student or school interest, your school or student team may select a sustainability area other than the ones listed below.

Consider mentoring a school or student team in your district or city to share what your school or team has learned and achieved. Mentoring can count as your Sustaining Green School activity or project.

Key tools and resources - Visit these websites to find the program’s best practices guides.	
<a href="#">Waste Reduction and Recycling</a> – Best Practices Guide	Use this guide to learn about best practices and to find educational and project resources.
<a href="#">Energy Conservation</a> – Best Practices Guide	Use this guide to learn about best practices and to find educational and project resources.
<a href="#">Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention</a> - Best Practices Guide	Use this guide to learn about best practices and to find educational and project resources.
<a href="#">Green Building</a> – Best Practices Guide	Use this guide when your school or district designs, constructs, or renovates its building(s) to reduce energy and water use, and to use non-toxic, sustainable building materials.
<a href="#">Healthy Schools</a> – Best Practices Guide	Use this guide to learn about best practices and to find educational and project resources to support student and staff health and wellness.
<a href="#">Litter Reduction</a> – Best Practices Guide	Use this guide to help your school community take action to prevent and clean up litter.
<a href="#">Transportation</a> – Best Practices Guide	Use this guide to learn about best practices and to find educational and project resources to help your school community make transportation choices which reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

## Grant and funding resources

- See additional resources in the best practices guides listed above.
- [Fundraising ideas related to recycling](#)
- [Gardening resources for schools](#) - See grants section
- [Grant and award opportunities](#)
- [Resources for Schools from Plastic Free Restaurants](#) - Email the nonprofit organization Plastic Free Restaurants at [contact@plasticfreerestaurants.org](mailto:contact@plasticfreerestaurants.org) to ask about cash subsidies for schools to switch from plastic to reusable products.