

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

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Kelly Stone

K-5 STEM Teacher, George L. Catrambone Elementary School
Executive Green Team Chair, Long Branch Public Schools
George L. Catrambone Elementary School (Monmouth County)

An educator with over 20 years of experience, Kelly Stone is a K-5 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) teacher at the [George L. Catrambone \(GLC\) Elementary School](#) and the chair of the Long Branch Public Schools Executive Green Team and GLC Elementary School Green Team. Kelly's passion for teaching and commitment to the environment have contributed to making [Long Branch Public Schools](#) a stand-out model for sustainability excellence. Like the district's "Green Wave" logo, Kelly is an unstoppable force for positive environmental change in New Jersey.



Under Kelly's leadership, and with the support of an active school district, administration, staff, parents and students, GLC Elementary School has achieved national recognition including the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon School designation. GLC Elementary School received *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*'s [Sustainability Champion](#) award in 2017, 2019 and 2021. All nine of the schools in Long Branch Public School District have achieved Sustainable Jersey's silver-level certification and seven of the schools have received the [Digital Schools Star Recognition](#).

"As an avid believer and supporter of environmental education and sustainability in schools, I strive to empower our students to become informed and contributing citizens, equipped to bring their ideas and solutions to the table to solve problems affecting their lives, their communities and the world," Kelly explained. "I wholeheartedly believe that our students have the power to change the world!"

Kelly was named GLC Elementary School Teacher of the Year in 2010 and 2022 and was selected as a New Jersey Climate Change Teaching Fellow. She created exemplar lessons plans for the [NJ Climate Change Education Hub](#). When asked about her long list of accomplishments, Kelly is quick to credit others and downplay her role. Kelly said, "Long Branch Public Schools has successfully created a culture of sustainability that supports and encourages everyone in the district to be creative and purposeful in working toward new sustainability milestones."

Kelly is known for her determination and ability to accomplish challenging goals. These qualities may stem from her experience in competitive sports. A graduate of Long Branch High School, Kelly was captain of the swim team where she broke all 11 Long Branch High School records, some of which were 18 years old, and was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame. She was a Junior Olympic finalist and a New Jersey Zone Team member. She continues to be involved in swimming today; she has been a coach at [Central Jersey Aquatic Club](#) since 2008.

Although she is not completely comfortable in the spotlight, Kelly said she is proud to speak on panels and workshops to share what GLC Elementary School is doing and to learn from others. She was a presenter for the [Climate Change Across the Curriculum and Beyond!](#), which was a virtual professional development session with New Jersey's First Lady Tammy Murphy and a panel of educators. For *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*, Kelly is a regular speaker; she participated in the following panels: [From Food "Waste" to Food Security](#); [Sustainable Jersey Digital School Deep Dive: Digital Learning Practices](#); *Sustainable Jersey for Schools School Champions Panel* and more.



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Silver-Certified: GLC Elementary School was constructed in 2014 following the practices of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a green building rating system that measures environmental performance. GLC Elementary School and the other five Long Branch Public Schools have achieved *Sustainable Jersey for Schools'* highest level of certification. In addition, GLC Elementary School, the middle school and the high school each received the [Sustainability Champion Award](#) for earning *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* certification with the highest point level in their respective category. To review all of the impressive actions that GLC Elementary School has accomplished read the [2022 Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Report for GLC Elementary School](#). Visit the school's social media for regular updates: Long Branch Public Schools Twitter ([@LBpublicschools](#)); GLC Elementary School Green Team Twitter ([@greener_glc](#)); GLC Elementary School Twitter ([@ElementaryGlc](#)); Long Branch Public Schools Facebook ([@lbpublicschools](#)).



GLC Elementary School Garden: Kelly serves as the garden leader for the GLC Elementary School gardens which consist of an outdoor garden, a soda bottle greenhouse garden (made from 1,500 recycled two-liter soda bottles), an indoor aeroponics garden and a new living green wall. The most recent growing season (fall through summer) was successful; the gardens provided over 1,800 pounds of fresh produce. Students and staff from all grade levels support the garden. In spring, weeds are pulled, the soil is turned over, organic compost is added, and a variety of herbs and veggies are planted. The garden is managed with environmentally friendly practices and no pesticides or chemicals are used to control weeds. Organic fish emulsion is used as fertilizer. There are approximately 18 members on the garden committee, with students responsible for maintaining, watering, harvesting and sampling the delicious and nutritious bounty. Last summer, the school donated produce weekly to the local food pantry at St. Vincent DePaul. Vegetables were provided to families during daily lunch distribution at the Long Branch Middle School through Sodexo Food Services and handed out at Back to School Night. This summer, the gardens provided produce to [JBJ Soul Kitchen](#), a non-profit community restaurant that serves paying and in-need customers. It is run by the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation. GLC Elementary School received 20 certification points for this work via the *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* action: [School Gardens](#).



Cooking Class with Celebrity Chef: This past year, Kelly held unique events to help students and staff educate their families about the importance of nutrition and making healthy, sustainable food choices. Kelly invited local celebrity chef [Marilyn Schlossback](#) from Long Branch restaurant [White Chapel Projects](#) to lead a cooking class with the students and their families. Chef Schlossback, the students and their families used the fresh ingredients that the students grew, harvested and packaged into individual portions to prepare nutritious meals. Kelly said, "So many families joined and were excited to cook with their children and our featured chef learning about the positive impact healthy and sustainable choices make for everyone." An additional cooking class, led by the school's vice principal, was also well received. "The students of GLC Elementary School are continuously looking for ways to educate the community about sustainability issues and behaviors that encourage sustainable practices throughout. Our students know what it means to be green and live with the environment in their thoughts and actions and this was a great way to celebrate and learn at the same time," Kelly added.



GLC Elementary School Living Wall: In June 2022, GLC Elementary School celebrated the unveiling of its new 7-by-9-foot vertical green wall supported by an irrigated planting system. Located in the school lobby, the wall will benefit the students, staff and members of the community as they care for the living plants. The wall was

made possible with a \$10,000 [Sustainable Jersey for Schools grant](#) funded by the New Jersey Education Association, in addition to other donations. Students and staff helped to build the wall while learning how the basin, pumps and hoses water the plants. The living wall furthers the efforts of the GLC Elementary School programs in addressing the 13 applicable *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* [Education for Sustainability](#) and biodiversity actions. Students will learn about the plants by tracking growth, measuring water use and learning about propagation from the spider plants. Since the wall was completed at the end of the school year, many of the lessons will start this year. The wall will serve as a focal point in the videos and newscasts the students create and share with the community.

Food Waste Reduction: GLC Elementary School was one of three New Jersey schools selected to receive a \$25,000 grant and technical assistance as part of the [Sustainable Jersey School Food Waste Pilot Program](#). The grant covered the purchase of an on-site composting machine and the implementation of other food waste reduction strategies. On-site training, student learning materials and implementation support is provided through the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Food Waste Team. GLC Elementary School received 15 certification points for documentation of food waste reduction strategies and completion of the *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* action: [Food Waste Management](#).



EmPowered Schools: Kelly has served as the lead teacher for the GLC Elementary School [EmPowered Schools](#) program for the past six years. The school successfully completed the program in 2022. The EmPowered Schools program provides free support and resources to educate PK-12 students in saving energy and money in their schools and homes. Approximately 30 students participated, and students met weekly to review the EmPowered Platform and complete the energy saving benchmarks assigned. The EmPowered Schools program is a collaboration between New Jersey Natural Gas, the Alliance to Save Energy and *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*. Kelly said, "Our school learned behavioral strategies to reduce energy waste. This partnership helped promote a culture of energy savings as the norm rather than the exception. The EmPowered Schools program has fostered a long-term impact for a less wasteful school." GLC Elementary School received 10 certification points for this program via the *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* action: [Behavior-Based Energy Conservation Programs](#).



Curriculum Development for New Jersey Climate Change Education Hub:

In June 2020, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to incorporate K-12 climate change education across content areas when the State Board of Education adopted the [2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards](#). The [New Jersey Climate Change Education Hub](#) is an online portal that connects educators to the resources they need to integrate climate change into their curriculum for all subject areas and grade levels. Working with [SubjectToClimate](#), Kelly created the climate curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade students that is provided for teachers to use. She created four lesson plans: 1) [Save the Sea Turtles!](#), 2) [Will Renewable Energy Guide Your Future?](#), 3) [Calculating Your Carbon Footprint](#), and 4) [How Does Your Garden Grow?](#) The Hub was created as part of the New Jersey Climate Change Education Initiative; a coalition of non-profit and higher education institutions including Sustainable Jersey, New Jersey School Boards Association, The College of New Jersey School of Education, New Jersey Audubon and the National Wildlife Federation.

Education and Experience: Kelly graduated from the Catholic University of America with a BA in early childhood education. After receiving her BA, she worked for 10 years as a teacher at the Long Branch Preschool. In 2007, she graduated from the University of Nebraska with a MS in Instructional Technology. Kelly was the math coach for students and staff at the Morris Avenue School before accepting a teacher position at GLC Elementary School in 2014. Kelly just completed the [Environmental Sustainability Education Graduate Certification at The College of New Jersey](#) in 2021.

More About Kelly: Kelly was born and raised in Long Branch. She is the oldest of four children and said she feels lucky to have grown up three blocks from the beach. Kelly's work ethic and dedication to community service comes in part from her parents. They ran the Perkins Family Restaurant in Neptune where she spent a lot of time. The restaurant was a local favorite for decades, due in part to her parent's commitment and involvement with the local community. Kelly loves to learn and knew from an early age that she wanted to be an educator.