



Elk Grove Unified School District – NSPRA Gold Medallion Award Entry 2011 Energy Conservation Program Summary

Research

Over the past three years, California's K-12 public schools have experienced devastating state budget cuts. For Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD), this has meant a cumulative \$100 million in budget cuts. Next year, EGUSD faces an additional \$40 million in reductions. During this budget crisis, the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD) informed EGUSD that it was the worst energy user out of the 13 districts in Sacramento County.

Out of this dire need to redirect money back into programs and services for students and the desire to be better energy consumers, the EGUSD Energy Conservation Program was born. A committee was formed, comprised of representatives from all employee associations, school sites, maintenance and operations, communications, parents and SMUD. This group began the process of looking at how the district uses its energy to serve 62,000 students and 5,600 employees in 64 school sites and six auxiliary buildings. The Energy Conservation Committee worked with the district's Budget Committee to set a \$1 million goal in energy savings for the 2010-2011 school year. A savings goal was set for each school, with the incentive of being awarded some of the shared savings as part of their site funds for the following school year.

Planning/Analysis

The Communications Department was tasked with creating a marketing and education campaign at no additional cost to the district that would positively impact employee behavior in order to reach the \$1 million goal. The primary audience was determined to be staff with a secondary audience of students. Staff researched other district initiatives from across the nation and in Australia and Canada. Input was sought from the Energy Conservation Committee, SMUD, employee association representatives and teachers. While EGUSD Communications considered a number of communication tools, the department was limited by a lack of a budget. Communications decided to seek outside donations instead and the district was able to obtain a \$4,000 donation to pay for the marketing materials. This funding and the creativity of staff allowed for the creation of the following communication tools:

- A student-designed logo and a staff-created theme of "Be Energy Wise. Conserve."
- An energy coordinator at each school and department to encourage a culture of conservation.
- A staff-created, dynamic website used as a resource for schools, departments and the community which includes the following elements: mission statement and goals; energy guidelines; a district energy thermometer that tracks the district's progress towards its \$1 million goal; a site savings webpage to show each site's specific energy savings progress; "Energy Sparks" conservation tips; energy resources links, including documents for employees to print for their own energy savings campaign; "On the Grid," an area to showcase good ideas; a form for feedback and suggestions.
- Marketing materials designed to be educational and fun: posters for staff, custodians, schools and departments; an Energy Conservation Implementation Manual; Energy Monitor Toolkits for elementary schools, including a badge, guide, classroom conservation pledge and classroom checklist.
- Emails and an electronic newsletter were used for communications throughout the year to staff.

Implementation/Communication



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A soft roll-out occurred last spring when Communications and the Associate Superintendent of Facilities and Planning began the process of sharing the goals for the 2010-2011 school year and conservation ideas through various staff meetings. At these meetings, administrators were asked to identify an energy coordinator for the following school year. This soft roll-out was reinforced with “Energy Sparks,” energy saving tips which were included in “News and Notes,” a weekly email that goes out to all staff.

On August 6, 2010, the official program was launched through a presentation at a Board of Education meeting. This official launch was quickly followed by a series of presentations at staff meetings. With the program underway, the district celebrated October as Energy Conservation Month with school site activities and a Resolution by the Board of Education.

An important component of the communication plan was sharing that each school site and auxiliary buildings have a concrete energy savings goal based on their baseline performance data. Goals vary from site to site, taking into consideration factors such as square footage, portables, energy efficient building systems, total energy consumption and three different school calendar schedules. Schools that meet or exceed their site goal will receive shared savings dollars from the overall district energy savings.

Communications’ designed the graphic and written materials for use throughout the district. Each department received a packet including a Bright Ideas poster, Staff Energy Conservation Tips poster, a call for volunteer energy coordinators and an Energy Conservation Implementation Manual. Each school site received the same items with the addition of a Bright Ideas poster for every classroom. Optional materials were created for use by energy coordinators located at sites and departments. These include an Energy Monitor Toolkit for elementary students and their teachers. The toolkit includes an Energy Monitor’s Badge, classroom pledge, monitor’s guide and classroom checklist. This toolkit is being used by more than 200 elementary classrooms throughout the district where students act as a classroom energy monitors. Other resources included “Good Job” note and an “Oops” note for taping to fellow employee work stations or classroom doors.

The Energy Conservation Program website was designed by the district’s webmaster and Communications staff. The goal was to create an impactful website that outlined the importance of saving money through conserving energy. The website was designed for both internal (employee) use and external (parents, students, community members and business partners.) A dynamically data driven sites savings page - where schools and departments can see how much they’ve saved towards their yearly goal has generated the most website traffic with several thousand page views after each new posting. The web content also includes a savings thermometer graphic and page that charts how much the district has saved, downloadable energy guidelines, resources that include implementation manuals, energy conservation posters, tips, classroom checklists and printable “good job” and “oops” cards to let people know when they have done something great or to highlight areas in need of improvement.

Evaluation/Results

The Energy Conservation Program has been deemed a success in Elk Grove Unified School District based upon site savings and the widespread use of marketing materials. The feedback received from teachers, school administrators, department directors and associates have been



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very positive. School sites are excited to participate knowing they can earn shared savings dollars for their sites.

Six months into the current fiscal year EGUSD has saved approximately \$768,000 and is well on its way to exceed our lofty goal of \$1 million. This has equated to a reduction of approximately 13,000,000 kWh in electricity consumption, which is equal to removing 1,800 cars off the road and planting well over 40,000 new trees each year. EGUSD expects to double the energy savings by the end of the fiscal year and continue this program for years to come.