

Case Study: Rural Oregon School

Small school district finally gets its long-time wish

Huntington is a very small, rural Oregon town of 500 residents that got its start in the 1800s when two railroads merged at the town site. The railroad theme is carried out today by Huntington High School that adopted the “Locomotives” nickname.

With 34 students and seven teachers at the high school, the district runs on a shoestring. When the opportunity came along to acquire energy efficient lights, there was no stopping the train.

“The School Board has had lighting upgrades on its wish list for the past 13 years,” said Gerald Hopkins, Huntington Superintendent at the time of the project now retired. “We are all very pleased with the project. The new lights have made a world of difference.”

The High School English teacher agrees. “The classroom has new energy. And, I’m talking about the kids! The printed word leaps off the page now since they can see better now. It is a very positive difference.”

One teacher wore sunglasses in his classroom as a joke because it was so much brighter.

Several teachers, including Elementary School Teacher Amy Garfield commented on the quality of the lighting. “There are no more shaded spots in the room,” she said. “It’s a nice even light that fills the entire room.”

Another benefit to the lighting project was that the school’s lighting was old enough that PCB leakage was a concern. Huntington’s old lights had PCBs. Old magnetic ballasts contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that can cause serious health problems. Moreover, a school district can be subject to hefty fines (up to \$27,000 per day) if it improperly disposes of these materials.

Lighting project begins

The time had come for a lighting upgrade at Huntington. The school district contracted with an outside project manager with lighting installation expertise to expedite their upgrades.

The Huntington School project included replacement of T12 lamps and magnetic ballasts with energy efficient T8 lamps and electronic ballasts; incandescent lamps with T8s; and 70-Watt metal halide lamps with new T8 lamps and electronic ballast fixtures.

The project is expected to save more than 56 percent of Huntington’s lighting electricity use per year and reduce the Huntington School District’s electricity bill by \$2,048 per year at current rates.

“We are all very pleased with the project. The new lights have made a world of difference.”

Gerald Hopkins
Huntington Superintendent



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Williams Oil Settlement

When energy project funds became available in 2005 through the Williams Oil Settlement, Huntington School District became a prime candidate for a lighting efficiency project.

The Oregon Department of Energy administers the \$1 million Williams Oil Settlement. The settlement was the result of a coordinated investigation into allegations of price manipulation and antitrust violations in the Western power market during the energy crisis of 2000-01 by the attorneys general of Oregon, California and Washington.

The Oregon Department of Energy identifies and distributes the funds to school facilities with high-energy use. Huntington School District qualified. The Williams Oil Settlement funds paid a portion of the \$30,720 lighting project cost.

Other funding

In addition to the Williams Settlement Funds, the Huntington School District lighting project also qualified for the Oregon Department of Energy's Business Energy Tax Credit Program. The School District, unable to use a 35 percent tax credit, partnered with Intermountain Community Bank.

The bank accepted the School District's tax credit eligibility and paid Huntington School District a lump sum of \$8,617 when the project was complete (25.5 percent of eligible costs). Intermountain Community Bank will take the 35 percent tax credit of \$11,827 over a five-year period (10 percent the first two years and 5 percent the last three years). Idaho Power, the school district's electric utility company, also provided a direct incentive of \$3,700 for the lighting project.

Thanks to the Williams Oil Settlement, the Oregon Department of Energy, Intermountain Community Bank and Idaho Power, this small, rural Oregon school is saving electricity and money.



Before



After

Business Energy Tax Credit Pass-through Program

The Business Energy Tax Credit Pass-through Option is available to schools, non-profits organizations and others without tax liability. It can also be used by for-profit businesses that choose to use it. The Oregon Department of Energy reviews the application for the energy project before the project begins and issues a pre-certification just as it does for a regular energy tax credit project.

When a qualifying pass-through project is completed, the project owner turns in the necessary paperwork. Project owners are responsible for finding a pass-through partner (a business with state tax liability that is willing to accept the 35 percent tax credit in exchange for a 25.5 percent cash payment to the project owner).

The Department of Energy is available to assist in finding a pass-through partner once the project owner completes the project and submits the paperwork if no partner has been identified. Interested project owners and/or partners who would like to participate should contact Barbara Bonnem, Pass-through Option Developer, by e-mail at barbara.bonnem@state.or.us for more information.