

FEEL WARMER THIS WINTER!

Energy ▲ Awareness ▲ Month ▲ October 1997

Oregon
Office
of Energy



Portland
General
Electric

Students, Staff Save Money for Schools — and Carry Energy Awareness Home

Portland Public Schools found that teamwork pays off when a school district wants to cut energy expenses.

Changes in how students, teachers and custodians operate and maintain lights and heating systems saved Portland Public Schools \$296,000 last year. Another \$300,000 in savings came from administrative improvements such as tracking energy and water use to detect problems quickly, recycling and preventing waste, negotiating better rates for utility services, and uncovering errors in meter reading and billing.

“Students and teachers stay warm,” said Reg Martinson, head of the Physical Plant Division. “But we’re smart about how we use energy. Everything we save goes back to the general fund and can be used for educational programs.”

The savings are the result of a partnership with Portland General Electric to bring in two energy specialists to work in the schools to save energy. The program is in its third year.

Custodians also work with students to reduce energy costs. “Kids learn from me,” said Clyde Chamberlain, head custodian for Sellwood Middle School. “They watch what I do and I talk to them about conservation. It’s a kick when I see them change their behavior.”

Energy Specialist Jan Kerbo wanted a way to involve students more in managing energy use. So she helped develop a simple energy conservation checklist to determine how much energy students can save at home. Portland fourth graders will take the checklist home in October, add up energy savings from completing checklist tasks, and bring their worksheets to class. Teachers will send classroom totals to the energy specialists, who will publish the results in the district energy newsletter.

“This is a good way to connect home with school,” Kerbo said. “With the checklist, homework has an immediate and lasting benefit.”

The checklist is included in “Energy Matters,” math and science activities for the classroom and home that raise awareness of energy issues. The teacher and student packets were produced for Energy Awareness Month by a partnership of utilities and state and city agencies.

On top of savings from projects directed by the energy specialists, the district saved \$187,000 in energy costs last year through capital improvements.

Thanks to a low-interest line of credit from the Oregon Office of Energy, over the past six years the district installed efficient lighting in almost all its schools and rebuilt boilers and installed computerized energy management systems in half its buildings. Incentives from Pacific Power and Portland General Electric reduced the cost of retrofits. All Portland Public Schools will be energy efficient by the year 2000.

“We want to get the word out,” said Energy Specialist Patrick Wolfe. “District-wide, we saved the equivalent of 10 teacher positions last year.”

Since it began energy conservation efforts in 1990, Portland Public Schools has saved more than \$6 million without sacrificing comfort or safety. A comprehensive program of energy retrofits — efficient lighting, rebuilt boilers and energy management control systems, together with energy specialists who work with schools to cut resource consumption, will capture substantial savings in any school district. To learn what you can do in your school, call Wolfe at (503) 916-2000, extension 4264.

— *Portland Public Schools*

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