

OPS by the Numbers:

Students: 47,000
Staff: 7,300
Schools: 89
Square Footage: 8.5 M
Annual energy costs: \$10 M
Annual \$ savings: \$800,000
Annual CO₂ savings: 9,000 MT
Green Teams: 85% of schools
Website: ops.org/gsi

How we're Helping:

Energy Action Plan
ENERGY STAR Benchmark
Lighting Retrofit
Green Challenge Series
Green Schools Initiative
Ongoing Facilitation

Omaha Public Schools Case Study



Year One

Our work with the state of Nebraska's largest school district (45,000+ students and 7,300+ staff) began in late 2009 when we completed an Energy Action Plan. The Plan's foundation was an ENERGY STAR rating for every school; upon which several energy and resource conservation strategies were built. Opportunities for increased efficiency were identified in several areas, and the Plan specified strategies to save money and improve the district's environmental footprint.

Once the Plan was completed, the school district asked us to take the lead in implementing many of the strategies contained therein. We have been serving as the District's

sustainability coordinator since July 2010 and have established the District's Green Schools Initiative. It's an endeavor that engages not only internal staff and administrators, but also includes students, parents and other community members.

During the first twelve months we created the infrastructure to support the Initiative longer-term, sought out and implemented specific energy saving opportunities, and assisted the district with a major lighting retrofit, which was the top recommendation from the Energy Action Plan.

Going Forward

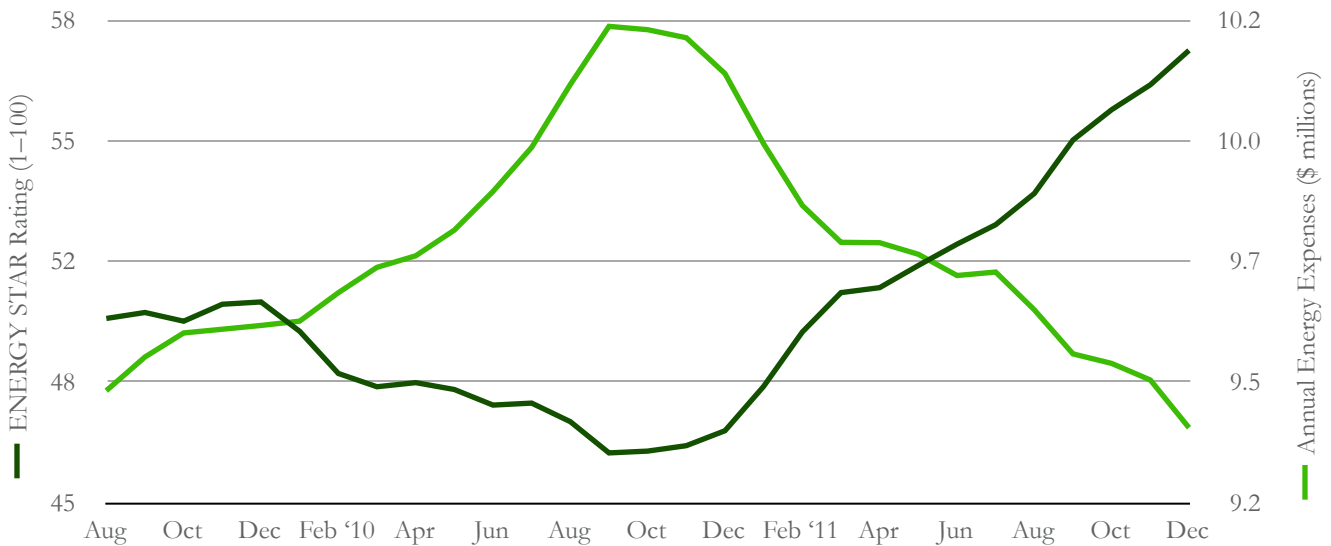
As we enter our second year as the Initiative's coordination team, our attention turns towards engaging the schools on a one-on-one basis. We have been able to shift policies at a district level; now our plan is to ensure they are implemented in every school and the district's administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents and the community are all actively engaged.

We look forward to each and every minute we get to spend with our future leaders and are continually amazed at how passionately the district's students approach greening their schools. It's a project that has been successful and fulfilling on many levels.



The Results

As we like to say, the proof is in the pudding. The district's annual energy expenses for the last 12 months have decreased over \$730,000 when compared to the prior 12-month period. The energy savings indirectly correlate to a recent sharp increase in the district-wide ENERGY STAR rating. And oh, by the way, CO₂ emissions are way down too. The Omaha Public Schools project proves our unique ability to couple operational efficiencies with organizational engagement to achieve financial and environmental savings.



Graph comparing OPS' average ENERGY STAR rating with annual energy costs. Average annual savings: \$730,000

Green Schools: An Immense Opportunity

Approximately 20 percent of our national population - about 60 million people - go to school every day as students, teachers, staff or administrators. Through the creation of green schools, there is an amazing opportunity to positively impact student performance, decrease costs, protect the environment and affect the lives of millions. What an opportunity!

A green school is, in essence, an energy and resource efficient school that minimizes all types of waste; energy waste, water

waste, material waste, purchasing waste, and more. Operating such a high-performance environment not only results in cost savings, it sets an excellent example for students to carry out of the classroom.

There is no doubt that opportunities to increase efficiency exist in America's schools; they abound throughout all organizations, and schools are no different. And in all likelihood, we're not talking peanuts here; the potential for savings is huge.

“ The green schools movement is the biggest thing to happen to education since the introduction of technology to the classroom.

Glenn Cook

Editor in Chief
American School Board Journal

