

OPS Snapshot:

Annual energy costs: \$10.6 M
Energy savings: \$2.2 M
CO₂ savings: 41,500 metric tons
Green Teams: 99% of schools
Awards: Green Ribbon,
Excellence for Energy Efficiency
Website: district.ops.org/gsi

How We're Helping:

Energy Action Plan
ENERGY STAR Benchmarking
Lighting Retrofits
Green Challenge Series
Green Schools Initiative
Green Data Sheets
Energy Management Team
Dashboard

Omaha Public Schools Case Study



Project Background

Our work with the state of Nebraska's largest school district began in late 2009 when we completed the district's Energy Action Plan. The Plan's foundation is a series of metrics, the most important of which was an ENERGY STAR rating for every school; several energy and resource conservation strategies were built upon those metrics. 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 June 2010 and are keeping the district's Green Schools Initiative moving forward. It's an endeavor that engages not only internal staff and administrators, but also includes students, parents and other community members.

Throughout the last few years of our work, we have continued to seek out and implement specific energy and resource saving opportunities at all levels of the organization; from the grass roots measures in schools to district-wide systemic opportunities working with the administration.

Key Successes

After two years into implementation of the Energy Action Plan, the District met the Energy Star goal of a 56 district average Energy Star rating. The goal was revised to a 70 district rating. As of September 2013, the District also reached the goal of increasing recycling by 45% since 2010.

Additionally, fourteen schools in the district have received ENERGY STAR Awards by 2014, water consumption has reduced to pre-drought levels, and a new high level of engagement was reached. These successes are just the beginning of what's to come.



The Results

As we like to say, the proof is in the pudding. The district's annual energy expenses for are \$2 million lower than the most expensive 12-month period. The energy savings indirectly correlate to a sharp historical 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 benefits.

\$2.2 Million *in cumulative estimated savings and avoided costs since 2010*

- \$2.2 million in savings comes from energy savings from finding opportunities for lighting upgrades and promoting behavior changing programs to reduce energy use
- \$42,000 in avoided costs from increased recycling and savings from decreased waste productions since 2010

Nationally Recognized

OPS' efforts have not gone unnoticed. The following national, regional, and local awards were given to OPS to acknowledge their achievements in the green schools movement:

- 2014: Department of Education's District Green Ribbon Award (one of only nine districts to receive the award)
- 2012-2014: Four OPS schools won the Green Ribbon Award, the only schools to win the award in Nebraska
- 2011: Omaha Public Power District's J.M. Harding Award for demonstrating efficient and innovative use of electricity
- 2010-2014: Four buildings/additions receive LEED certifications

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 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

Visit the Omaha Public Schools Green Schools Initiative website at districtops.org/gsi

