



Preparing our students for Tomorrow, Today

Schools on the Path to Sustainability

Salem-Keizer School District Energy: Watt Watchers

What: Watt-watchers is a program that actively involves students in sustainability activities through energy auditing and occupancy awareness.

Where: Salem-Keizer School District, Marion County

How: The Salem-Keizer school district has selected the Watt Watchers program, developed in Texas, as the foundation for their energy conservation program. District Sustainability Coordinators Kathleen Hill and David Furr begin the process at a school with an initial audit and a meeting with the principal, custodian and sponsoring teacher.

Upon completion of a participation agreement a commitment of \$500 dollars is made to the participating teacher for their Watt-Watchers agreement; the funds from the project can be used at their discretion, for any instructional purpose from classroom materials and field trips to guest speakers. The student group can be an entire classroom, a leadership group, an environmental club or even a choir. These students work with the help of the sponsoring teacher, and monitor classroom light switches and computer usage throughout the school on a regular basis. They leave green or pink notes that indicate whether they found energy waste or savings and compile a monthly tracking sheet. Students also distribute compact fluorescent light bulbs to staff, create posters to promote the project, and read electric meters to track real time site use.

The sponsoring teacher circulates information to staff about sleep mode for computers and custodians do large-scale light bulb swaps. Hill emphasizes the positive focus of the project, where there is constant room for improvement and savings. While the program requires leadership from a teacher, the process cannot succeed without the support of the entire school community. Often schools encourage student and staff participation through energy reduction contests and awards. Schools are also committed to an assembly presented by the sustainability coordinators as a part of their Watt Watchers agreement. The school-wide assembly program changes each year, and creatively educates students about Watt-watchers, energy conservation and recycling.

Benefits: The cost savings to the district have been significant, with \$450,000 in avoided costs during each of the previous two years, with savings well over \$1,000,000 since the program's inception in 2002. Savings resulted from student Watt-Watchers, equipment updates (such as making the switch from incandescent to compact fluorescent bulbs) and using sleep mode for their 12,000 computers. This translates into 28 million pounds of pollutants kept out of the atmosphere each year! Hill and Salem-Keizer earned a national award from the Alliance for Community Media for their all-school assembly program that promotes Watt Watchers and recycling. The district has used the success of Watt Watchers to extend their resource conservation program with an annual Car Free Day. This day-long event has been recognized nationally as it introduces thousands of students to the benefits of mass transit and alternative transportation and brings \$10,000 in cash prizes to the schools.

You can do it too: To learn more contact:

Kathleen Hill, Utilities Conservation Specialist
Salem Keizer Public Schools Facilities Services
3630 State St. Salem, OR 97301 503-399-3288
<http://www.salkeiz.k12.or.us/reap>

Additional info about the Watt Watcher program can be found at: <http://wattwatchers.org/>



The Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative is a project of the Zero Waste Alliance
One World Trade Center, 121 SW Salmon St., Suite 210, Portland, OR 97204
Tel: 503-279-9383, schools@zerowaste.org, www.zerowaste.org/schools/