

Mansfield Independent School District

TEEA 2017 Winner: Innovative Operations/Management



Energy Conservation Program reduces electricity, natural gas, and water use.

You might think that immense capital investments would be needed to drastically reduce utility expenses across an entire school district. While that might be true in most circumstances, for one North Texas school district, a shift in mindset and behavior was enough to reduce its expenses and save the district nearly \$7 million since 2012—money it now uses elsewhere in the district to improve the learning experience for students.

Mansfield Independent School District started its Energy Conservation Program in 2012 with three primary goals: reduce the environmental impact of school district operations; reduce overall utility expenditures by 20 percent; and educate students, teachers, and community members about their roles in implementing efficient practices.

To achieve these goals, the Mansfield board of trustees hired two energy specialists from existing staff to develop a program to maximize environmental benefits and financial savings. The comprehensive plan the specialists designed focuses on precise scheduling of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and lighting runtimes; close monitoring of water bills to detect leaks; and replacing light bulbs with new energy-efficient LED bulbs.

Another important aspect of the program is the deep connection that the energy specialists make with the stakeholders (such as teachers, administrators, kitchen managers, custodians, and students). These relationships make energy efficiency fun and increase participation.

On any given day, you will see the energy specialists walking through the halls on one of their 2,500-plus yearly building audits, high-fiving students and commending teachers for their efforts to reduce

energy use. They work closely with campus administrators to provide them with feedback on how well their campus is supporting the cause for energy efficiency.

The specialists go beyond working with just adults. Each year, they present information to more than 1,000 elementary school students, which inspired them to start Watt Watcher teams. Operated by students and supervised by teachers, these teams inspect their campuses after school to make sure computers are shut down, lights are turned off, and the school is implementing efficient energy practices.

The Energy Conservation Program created significant reductions in utility expenses. Since inception, the district has saved 40 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, 20,599 thousand cubic feet of natural gas, and over 450 million gallons of water.

This district-wide program shows that, with everyone working together, significant environmental and economic benefits can be attained, lighting the way to a sustainable future.