

Creating an Energy Committee in Your School

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Many school-wide energy conservation campaigns are led by one enthusiastic teacher, however, those projects often cease to exist when that teacher is no longer spearheading the effort. Creating an Energy Committee in your school will provide a means to bring together many different people from the school community that are motivated to work together on energy initiatives. The committee members may change over the years, but with an established committee in place, there is a better chance that energy conservation and awareness will continue to be a priority in the district.

There are several ways an Energy Committee may be formed in your school or district. Here are just a few examples.

Formal

The School Board names a group of people (with or without their consent/interest) to serve as Energy Committee district-wide.

The Principal names a group of people (with or without their consent/interest) to serve as Energy Committee for that particular school.

The District Facilities Manager is appointed as the leader of the Energy Committee and his/her staff make up the rest of the committee (other building occupants may or may not be involved).

Informal

A green team is formed as a result of joining the Wisconsin Green and Healthy Schools Program.

A group of interested teachers and/or students (possibly an environmental group) take it upon themselves to monitor the energy use in their school and encourage energy conservation informally.

Your school may have a group of people interested in conserving energy as a result of taking a KEEP School Building Energy Efficiency Education course.

Identify if an Energy Committee Exists

The first step is to determine whether your school or district has a formal or informal Energy Committee already established. It is best to work with individuals who already have energy conservation and energy awareness as a priority. Ask your facilities personnel, principal, custodians, teachers, and anyone else you think might know something about an Energy Committee in your school.

Once you've identified if there is an existing committee or not, you can focus on either creating a new committee or working with the current committee to make sure it is operating to its fullest potential.

Creating a New Energy Committee

You may have piqued the interest of a few building occupants when you were doing your initial investigation. Keep track of who you talked to and their interest level; they could be key players in the future.

You should discuss how formal the committee should be with your principal, then determine what role the school board should play, if any. It is important to be as inclusive and transparent as possible throughout this process.

Next, identify the main purpose or goal of the Energy Committee so when you talk to others, you will be able to provide consistent responses. It is okay for the goals and objectives of the Energy Committee to change as it develops, but you should have some general sense of what types of activities the group will conduct and how much time committee members should plan to commit. For example:

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“The Energy Committee will raise the energy awareness of all building occupants and lower utility bills by developing and implementing an energy action plan that identifies proper energy management policies and outlines how energy education will be integrated into the curricula. The committee will meet monthly and subcommittees will likely be formed and meet more frequently if needed.”

See **Who's Who on an Energy Committee** for a list of individuals that should be represented on the Energy Committee. Begin conversations with these individuals and try to drum up interest. Use the information provided during the KEEP School Building Energy Efficiency Education course (and in this supplement) to help others understand the potential energy savings and the importance of energy literate building occupants.

If a group of interested individuals has been identified, either the School Board will have to formally recognize the committee or the group can begin meeting informally, depending on your district's policies and interest.

Improving an Existing Energy Committee

If your school/district has an Energy Committee in place, request to attend the next meeting. You may also request the minutes of previous meetings if available. Determine the interest level of current members and gather as much information as possible regarding what actions the committee has taken in the past and what projects they are working on currently.

If the existing Energy Committee is inactive or members have low interest levels, review the suggestions above for creating a new Energy Committee and see if getting new members on the committee can spark some action.

Once an Active Energy Committee is Formed

Each Energy Committee will be different. Committee goals, objectives, and action items should be identified by the group and updated as needed. Make sure all voices are heard, including custodians, food service personnel, students, etc. A strong committee will draw upon all members to develop the most effective energy management policies. A comprehensive energy education plan can only be implemented with the input of all key players represented on the committee.

Report what the committee is doing to the school board, teachers, staff, students, and parents frequently. Write articles for the school newsletters, provide updates on daily announcements, involve students and parents as much as possible, or find other ways to convey the importance of what the Energy Committee is doing and how it impacts everyone in the building or district. Celebrate successes along the way.

For support/consultation services, contact KEEP at keep@uwsp.edu or 715.346.4770.

Who's Who on an Energy Committee

Energy Advisor, Focus on Energy
School District Utility Account Manager, Local Utility Company
District Facilities Manager (or equivalent title)
Principal
Superintendent (District Administrator)
School Business Official
Curriculum Coordinator
School Board Member
Three Faculty Members (representing various grades/subjects)
Support Staff
Food Service Representative
Custodial/Maintenance Representative
Student Representative(s)
Parent Representative(s)

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