

A Rationale for School Building Energy Efficiency Education

Energy education can help students of today handle many of the energy resource issues and opportunities our nation faces. We have challenging energy decisions ahead of us, and the solutions will include a mix of energy efficiency measures, new technologies, and renewable resources. These decisions will need to be made by educated individuals who have a solid understanding of energy basics, including the importance of energy efficiency and resource management.

There are many challenges to including energy education in the school curriculum. Among these challenges are funds for resources and support materials. Fortunately, one of the best resources to teach students about energy is readily available to teachers: Their school building!

Through a school building, students can learn where their energy comes from, how it is consumed, and how it leaves the school. They can identify areas where energy is wasted and how it can be used more efficiently. Academic standards in math, science, language arts, technology education, and many other disciplines can be addressed by simply investigating the flow of energy through the building.

In addition to being an ideal resource for teaching about energy, there are added benefits to knowing the flow of energy through a school building, including reducing a school's utility costs by saving energy. Next to personnel, a school's energy costs are often the most expensive budget item. Paying less for energy means more funds may be available for other things, including school supplies and resources.

By developing and implementing *Energy and Your School*, a supplement to the *Energy Education Activity Guide*, KEEP is facilitating the utilization of the school building as a learning tool for energy education, while also contributing to increased energy efficiency and savings in K–12 schools.

Many people believe more needs to be done if energy education is to be widely and consistently instituted throughout Wisconsin in a manner that effectively promotes lifelong learning and links students to the world around them. This program utilizes and encourages school-to-career skills and the use of a rich set of community resources, including professionals representing Wisconsin's investor-owned, municipal, and cooperative utilities as well as businesses, environmental organizations, and institutions of higher education.

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