



Best Practices Case Study

www.kspartners.org/bestpractices/

January 2010

Westar Energy Takes Efficiency Message to Schools

Contact person: Sherii Farmer, Account Manager, Energy Efficiency, Westar Energy
sherii.farmer@westarenergy.com or 1.888.WORKS50 or www.westarenergy.com

There is a small joke that circulates among energy efficiency proponents in the utility industry that goes like this: "What is the most inefficient appliance in your household?" Answer: "Your teenager." It's a light-hearted jab at the age group that does indeed use quite a bit of electricity, but in all actuality, many energy efficiency studies and statistics support this perception. Youth ages 10 to 18 typically take longer showers than other age groups; use a large amount of electricity to power their cell phones, gaming systems, TVs, DVRs, music accessories; and, are starting to drive. In addition, youth often have a high connection to preserving their environment or being environmentally conscious and aware, and they have the ability to influence behavior change in other members of their family.

So, in 2008, representatives in Westar Energy's newly created Energy Efficiency division recognized an opportunity to reach a captive audience of Kansas students while at the same time helping Kansas teachers meet state-based standards for math, science and social studies. (Westar Energy is an all-electric utility, the largest in Kansas, providing electric service to about 679,000 customers in the state. Schools in Westar's service territory, which is essentially the eastern half of Kansas, are eligible to participate in the school programs.)

The EfficiencyWorks for Education program, created by Westar Energy, allows teachers to request a grade-specific classroom presentation facilitated by trained Westar employees, and gives them options for follow-up lessons in the classroom. The EW for Education program is split into three age groups: K-4th, 5th – 8th, and 9th – 12th. Classroom presentations cover topics about how Westar generates electricity for consumers to use; what students can do around the house to be more energy efficient, like turning off lights and the TV when not in use, taking shorter showers, etc.; and a discussion of renewable energy sources.

"By providing Kansas students with energy efficiency information and hands-on activities, we hope to instill good habits now that will benefit them throughout life when it comes to using energy wisely and preserving the environment," said Sherii Farmer, account manager and school program coordinator at Westar.

[Continued on next page >>](#)

For the **kindergarten through 4th grade program**, a classroom presentation includes a short video featuring Timon and Pumba from Disney's "The Lion King," illustrating the concepts of reduce, reuse and recycle. After that, the students sit in front of a model of a home that is not energy efficient. Each student is given a magnet to place on the home in a spot that indicates poor use of energy. Then, the Westar facilitator engages them in a brief discussion of how the occupants of this sample home could be more energy efficient. Third, each student receives a workbook of energy efficiency concepts as well as an Energy Saving Diary that they take home to track their energy saving habits for one week. They return to the classroom after keeping the week-long diary and have a group discussion about how everyone did. For participating in EW for Education, each student receive a gift from Westar that includes more energy saving information, and an energy efficient light bulb and nightlight.

The classroom presentation for **5th through 8th grade students** includes a short video as well. The teacher can opt for one video on ways to save energy around the house or a second video showing how one of Westar Energy's coal plants operates. The hands-on portion of the classroom presentation includes discussion of various energy efficient light bulbs on the market today as well as how much less energy a CFL uses than a traditional light bulb. This concept is illustrated by hooking up two different light bulbs to an electric meter. These students also receive a workbook, and the teacher has the option of having this age group conduct a short home-energy audit of their own home using a workbook created by Westar Energy. The students conduct a walk-through of their own home (with parent guidance) then return to the classroom and enter their findings on a secure section of Westar's Web site. Based on the information submitted, each student receives a result, telling them how efficient or inefficient their own home is and steps they and their family can take to improve their home's efficiency. The gift from Westar for this age group includes energy efficiency information, a shower timer, and a packet of foam gasket covers to minimize air leaks around plug outlets and switch plate covers.

The **9th through 12th grade curriculum** is similar to that of the 5th through 8th grade, with more emphasis placed on the home energy assessment, as well as a more in-depth discussion of ways to save energy around the house and the development of renewable energy and the environment.

Since EfficiencyWorks for Education was launched in 2008, Westar Energy has made hundreds of classroom presentations, reaching more than 5,000 students.

To access details of Westar's EfficiencyWorks for Education program, visit www.westarenergy.com, click on Energy Efficiency, and then School Programs. There, users have the option of requesting the program online and viewing the documents used in the classroom. Interested teachers can also call 1.888.WORKS50 for more information or to schedule a classroom presentation.

2009-10 KSPE BOARD MEMBERS

Co-Chairpersons:

Paul Getto, Kansas Association of School Boards

Barbara Havlicek, KSU College of Education

Glenda Burkett, Credit Union of America, Wichita

Debi Corrigan, Wichita Public Schools

Dave DePue, Ph.D., The Capitol Commission

Bill Frick, Shawnee Mission Public Schools

Anne Gilmore, Kansas State Dept of Education

Mike Willome, Ed.D., Wichita Public Schools

SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Credit Union of America, Wichita

Shawnee Mission Public Schools

Wichita Public Schools

Kansas Partners in Education

P.O. Box 1856

Wichita KS 67201-1856

www.kspartners.org

© 2010 KSPE. All Rights Reserved.