



USGBC
Montana Chapter

**BILLINGS PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

BILLINGS, MT

Billings Public School District is the largest in Montana consisting of 31 schools serving over 15,500 students



USGBC Montana Chapter

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Visit <http://www.usgbcmontana.org/> and click on Committees>>Green schools for more information on green schools in Montana.

SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

Building Green Schools Success through
Consensus and Commitment

Edited by [Page Huyette](#)

Change often occurs when people make a conscious choice to shift a culture from the status quo to one that embraces innovation and change. While implementing such large, abstract concepts can be difficult, the Billings School District has succeeded in making it happen with a committed facilities director and school-based teams that include custodians, principals, staff and students that recognize the importance of energy savings.

A Focus on Energy Savings

From July 2008 to November 2012, the Billings School District has reduced their energy consumption by 20% overall. This reduction is the equivalent of 1,956 vehicles being removed from the road for one year, or 278,683 tree seedlings grown for 10 years, removing 10,895 metric tons of CO₂ from the environment. These shifts have saved taxpayers approximately \$2,470,637,00.

As of spring 2012, 29 schools in the Billings Public School District have received Energy Star designation, raising the district's total Energy Star rating from 74 to 88 while also putting them in the national top 12 percent of energy saving school districts. Energy Star is a government-backed program that helps schools use resources efficiently, save money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by identifying systems, equipment, appliances and electronics that offer superior energy efficiency.¹

The prevailing climate and culture in the district has been to use only what is needed. Initially working in conjunction with former Director of Facilities Rich Whiney and the Yellowstone Business Partnership's green operations training program called Uncommon Sense, district staff committed themselves to continual monitoring of sites, monthly feedback and controlled energy usage by ensuring computers are turned off and other utilities are always being used efficiently.

These efforts have resulted in a stable utility budget with the ability to absorb periodic rate increases through their savings.

¹ <http://searchdatacenter.techtarget.com/definition/Energy-Star>



“Our schools have benefitted in many positive ways as a result of their commitment to the Energy Star Program. This program highlights our commitment to both our taxpayers and the environment with a savings of over 2.5 million dollars and a cleaner environment.”

--Lew Anderson, Director of Facilities



Public-Private Partnerships Drives Change

Partnerships between the district and local businesses have enable School District 2 to establish a district-wide recycling program with the assistance of the group Earth First Aid. Estimates place weekly recycling at 200 pounds of office paper, 100 pounds of cardboard, two pounds of aluminum and a 50-gallon container of plastics. A local electronics recycler holds paint and toxic waste roundups being held every May to handle electronic waste. Placing signs on local recycling trucks with sponsor logos help get the word out to the community while student-led green teams and recycling clubs round out the effort at individual schools.

Future Plans

The district facilities office is looking into the transfer of cleaning product funding from school budgets to their office, which would allow them to compensate five pilot schools for green cleaning products, set an example for other schools and districts to follow, and provide financial incentives to school custodians as a way to spread understanding of the health and safety benefits of purchasing and using green products.

Portions of this article were excerpted with permission from the 2011 UnCommon Sense Business Report provided by the Yellowstone Business Partnership.

Features at a Glance

- ✓ Community partnerships
- ✓ Staff monitoring
- ✓ Recycling program
- ✓ 2 Energy Star schools



Community Recycling Coordinator:
Yellowstone Valley Citizen's Council

Website: YVCC

District Contact: *Lew Anderson, Director of Facilities*

Email: andersonl@billingsschools.org

Project Size: *31 schools*

Funding: *Community sponsors & district funding*

Additional Resources:

Community Recycling Coordinator:
Yellowstone Valley Citizen's Council
Website: YVCC

Earth First Aid Recycling
Website: Earth First Aid
Phone: (406) 698-0903

For more information on UnCommon Sense visit: Uncommon Sense

About Our Chapter

The USGBC Montana Chapter promotes balanced social, economic, and environmental stewardship in Montana by leading and educating about green building practices that will create healthy and sustainable communities in which to live, work and play.