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## Lafayette School District Saves Money with Green Initiatives

By Sophie Braccini



The Green Team checks the new energy efficient lights in the Stanley Gym Photo Steve Richard

page report that listed areas where improvements could be made, the detailed cost associated with the changes and the payback period." Report in hand, the Green Team selected the projects with a return-on-investment (ROI) period of 10 years or less.

"In the area of energy, we identified \$71,000 per year of saving opportunities with a short ROI, \$33,000 of potential savings on water use and \$20,000 on the waste management bill. The total of \$124,000 a year represents about 25% of the total cost of these posts in 2009," says Williams.

In the area of energy, the first recommendation was to replace the lights in the gym at Stanley Middle School. That project has already been completed, with a ROI period of less than a year, and much better lighting quality in the facility. "This is a win-win-win solution," explains Brill, "and now we are going to expand the replacement to the entire district."

One of the elements that made the move possible was that Williams and Johnston found a no-interest federal loan for the school to purchase the lights. "There are incentives, rebates, financial opportunities that we can take advantage of," states Williams.

"We are incredibly eager to move in the direction of more sustainable ways to manage our operations," says Brill, "but I'm not sure that staff had the possibility to do the study and research. The parents volunteers did all the behind the scene project management and they have been spectacular in that work. These are selfless individuals who are truly making a difference."

Many changes have already been made and more are coming as the Green Team continues its research and pulls other resources. For example, free faucet aerators provided by EBMUD were installed and are reducing that water use by 50%; the boiler time-clock can be replaced for about \$600 and will produce \$5,500/year in savings.

Some of the recommendations will take more time to implement. For example, 70% of the district's water usage is for landscaping. "We are meeting with EBMUD to perform a detailed review of the timed watering system," explains Williams. Another measure is the planting, in front of the District office, of a drought tolerant garden by parent volunteer Brad Crane.

With only a 13% diversion rate there is room for improvement in the district's waste management plan. But most of the waste comes from lunches, meaning from food that is sent from homes - this is not an area that Brill is ready to regulate, "our policy will be to encourage, raise awareness and educate," he says.

The Green Team will continue its work and Brill sees the parent volunteers as long term partners. "We thought we would be done after the first year," says Sustainable Lafayette co-founder Steve Richard, "but we are motivated as parents. We have no agenda, only the desire to identify opportunities while the District decides to take advantage of them, or not."

Since its first meeting about a year ago, the Green Group of the Lafayette School District has been working with a single mandate: find opportunities to save money that also make sense from a sustainability perspective. Green Group parent volunteers recently presented to the School Board some possible changes, both large and small, that they say could save the District one million dollars over the next ten years.

At the beginning of the 2009/2010 school year, Sustainable Lafayette organized a green summit with schools and public agencies to start identifying possible ways to save money by using less energy, less water and producing less waste. After the meeting, the District Green Team was formed, composed of Superintendent Fred Brill, Rob Davies (District Operations Manager), school board members Art Kapoor and Shayne Silva, Springhill Principal Bruce Wodhams, and Sustainable Lafayette members Barbara Williams, Ann Johnston and Steve Richard. They decided to meet once a month and identify money-saving green opportunities for the district.

"Our big chance was that Ann (Johnston) was able to secure for the district a 'Bright School Program,' a free audit offered by the Department of Energy," explains Williams. "The result was a 175-

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