

**CROSBY-IRONTON  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
NORTH ENTRANCE**

**Schools SEE  
how energy  
choices make  
a difference**



# SEEING IS BELIEVING

If that old saying is true, then students, teachers, administrators and staff members of Crosby-Ironton School District (ISD #182) should never doubt their ability to make a difference with wise energy choices.

Since July 2008, the northern Minnesota school district has made dramatic cuts in its energy usage and monthly utility bills—simply by changing behaviors. From the superintendent's office to the individual schools and classrooms, people are taking energy saving seriously. They are powering down computers and monitors, turning off lights in vacant classrooms, unplugging small appliances, removing unnecessary light bulbs and rotating maintenance activities to avoid spikes in electric demand.

They also are earning money for every kilowatt hour (kWh) of electricity they conserve and every British thermal unit (Btu) of natural gas they save.

## *Innovative Partnership*

Crosby-Ironton School District is the pilot site for an innovative partnership between Schools for Energy Efficiency® (SEE), Minnesota Power and Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation (MERC). The initiative connects SEE, a national award-winning K-12 energy conservation program, with rebates from local utilities based on measurable, verifiable results.

"This is a very unique partnership," said Becky Sass, program consultant, SEE. Since 2002, SEE has helped hundreds of schools across the country avoid millions of dollars in utility costs. While utility monitoring has always been part of the program, this is the first time rebates have been offered as performance incentives. "We don't have any other school districts and utility groups working together like this, but we're hoping to expand this approach to other areas."

## *Dramatic Results*

Initial results are dramatic. Prior to launching the program, SEE created a baseline for each school building's energy usage by looking at the prior year. It now is monitoring and comparing results quarterly to measure the reduction in kWh, kW and Btu, as well as the costs avoided. First year annual results show a 9.3 percent total energy reduction with a 13.6 percent electric usage reduction (318,849 kWh saved). Minnesota Power and MERC are rebating annual energy savings, building an account that the schools can use to reinvest in energy-efficiency improvements. Based on their significant efforts, Crosby-Ironton School District was recognized as an ENERGY STAR® Leaders Top Performer in 2009.

The program kicked off with the formulation of a core group that would communicate energy-efficiency measures and results throughout the district and community. It included key district personnel, such as the superintendent, business manager, energy efficiency coordinator, community education director, maintenance staff, food service workers and others—a team effort to set goals and determine what was needed to accomplish them.

"I commend Crosby-Ironton schools for demonstrating their commitment to energy efficiency and reducing their impact by participating in this program," said Tina Koecher, conservation improvement program administrator, Minnesota Power. "It is important to look at energy usage more holistically and recognize that how we choose to operate equipment is just as important as the equipment itself. This program takes that into consideration and provides incentives based on energy-usage reductions, which is the outcome we hope to achieve."

## *Learn & Earn*

Traditionally, the first year of SEE's five-year plan is focused on organizing and educating adults in the school district. Hoping to engage students early, Minnesota Power offered Crosby-Ironton schools an opportunity to participate in Learn & Earn, an energy education program that helps students learn about energy-efficient lighting and earn money by promoting their sale and usage.

Crosby-Ironton schools raised \$1,300 through the program, receiving \$1 or more for every energy-saving CFL or LED lighting product or furnace filter sold at participating retailers in October and November 2008.

## *Power of One® Community*

Crosby-Ironton School District has a history of success when it comes to energy education and conservation. Its Cuyuna Range Elementary School (CRES) in Deerwood was one of the first schools to participate in Minnesota Power's Learn & Earn program in 2006. Fifth graders at CRES later led efforts to get a solar panel installed at their school, raising money from a variety of sources, including Minnesota Power's solar rebate program.

"When schools make a visible commitment to energy efficiency, students pick up on that and bring it home," Koecher said. "It is exciting to take an established and successful program like SEE and seek ways to raise it to the next level. This program is a shining example of the Power of One® and how individual choices make a difference—whether it be one home, one business, or collectively as one community."