

Apache Junction Unified School District

FOCUS IN SCHOOLS

AJUSD 'Going Green'

"Going Green" is a global movement and one that has long been the politically correct, but not always the most cost efficient or aesthetically pleasing, way to do things.

But with spiraling energy and utility costs, individuals, organizations, businesses and public entities are more vigorously employing green strategies in an effort to help control costs.

For school districts, energy costs are generally the second largest expense after salaries. During the Challenges and Choices Town Hall meetings held by AJUSD last spring, looking into ways to conserve energy and reduce utility bills came up often.

Faced with the prospect of energy costs going up dramatically and resources shrinking for a variety of reasons, efforts are currently being stepped up to "analyze, reduce, cut back, reconfigure, recycle, and innovate with alternative energy sources," according to district administrators.



The newly remodeled courtyard at Desert Shadows Middle School is now a bright, open area where tables topped with shades invite students to sit and visit during lunch or can be used as outside instructional space.

Water Conservation Measures Cutting Costs 37%

Perhaps the conservation changes most noticeable to visitors and passersby is a districtwide shift in philosophy regarding school campus landscaping. Grass and towering trees may be aesthetically pleasing, but they are

labor intensive to keep up and use large amounts of water.

According to Associate Superintendent Jim Lockwood, this curtailment in water usage has been going on over the last two years and results can already be clearly seen in the drop in the district's yearly water expenses.

The district expects to lower its water bill by nearly 37 percent or \$143,000 from three years ago by the end of this school year. The emphasis is on now using grass only as focal points amidst desert landscaping.

The makeover of the central courtyard areas at Desert Shadows Middle School, and Desert Vista and Gold Canyon Elementary Schools are the most noticeable changes. Grass has been largely cur-

tailed in favor of concrete aprons and desert landscaping. Many of the trees have been removed making for brighter courtyards and less insects. The concrete aprons and tables with shades and benches can be utilized as outdoor instructional areas when the weather is nice, according to the principals.

The production from a re-fitted well on the high school site is now being used to water all athletic fields and scaled-back grass and landscaping at Apache Junction High School.

Other sites where grass and landscaping have been cut back include Thunder Mountain Middle School, Peralta Trail Elementary School, and Four Peaks Elementary School.

Free Classes at AJUSD Parent University

AJUSD's Parent University offers a variety of helpful classes for parents. These classes provide insights to everything from discipline to assisting your child with math.

1-2-3 Magic – October 28, 6-7:30 p.m. (Part 1 of 2), 1-2-3- Magic (Part 2 of 2) – November 5, 6-7:30 pm. Location: Peralta Trail Elementary, 10965 Peralta Trail.

This two-session program addresses the difficult task of child discipline with humor, keen insight and proven experience. This is a very effective discipline program for parents of children ages 2 to 12.

Dare to Prepare: New Driver Safety Program for Teens & Their Parents - October 22, 6-7:30 p.m. Title I Bldg., 1575 W. Southern Ave.

This is a 90-minute pre-permit presentation for parents and teens that provides critical information teens need to know before they take the wheel.

Leaps & Bounds Kindergarten Readiness "World as a Classroom" Workshop (1 of 4) October 29, 6-7:30 p.m. Four Peaks Elementary School, 1785 N. Idaho Road. Other class dates are November 5, November 12, November 19, (2, 3, and 4 in the series).

This is an interactive class. Parents are encouraged to bring their children. This program provides parents with help to get their children ready to enter kindergarten. The focus is on children 3-5 years of age.



The Apache Junction High School Prospector, here pictured with junior Student Council member Nora Heilman, was much in evidence at the recent Arizona Association of Student Councils (AASC) Spirit Conference held at Apache Junction High School. The 17-member AJHS Student Council hosted 1,200 delegates from 36 Valley schools and the response from all involved was very positive.

'Thin Client' Technology is Energy Saver

"Thin Client" technology is being introduced in the district as a replacement for the more conventional computers. This device operates without a hard disk drive, connecting the end user directly to the network servers.

One advantage gained using this technology is the significant reduction in energy used. These units don't require the large amounts of power and, as a result, these units produce less heat, which also contributes to savings on air conditioning costs. The district will realize a 67% reduction in power usage per classroom, a significant savings.

Size is also optimized. Thin Client units are more compact, utilizing only 3" x 8" of space. This allows placement of more units per classroom.

Cost is also a factor with each set-up costing approximately \$500.

There will still be a need, in some classrooms, for conventional computers. These are necessary to operate specialized software programs such as Illustrator, Photoshop, and other graphics and specialized programs utilized for certain coursework.

The district expects to phase in the new technology, replacing older conventional equipment approaching obsolescence. Funding for Thin Client technology will be provided through soft capital monies, or revenue provide by the State of Arizona for replacement of technology, textbooks and classroom materials.

Energy Efficiency Improves in New Facilities

As more energy efficient building products are introduced in the construction industry, new buildings are, by their very nature, more cost effective to operate.

In the 2006-2007 school year the district expended \$884,923 on electricity. While power rates are rising annually, the district expects cost per square foot to remain the same or decrease. Since 2006-2007, the district has added approximately 80,000 square feet in facilities.

Examples of improved energy efficiency can be found in the new facilities at Four Peaks and Peralta Trail elementary schools and at Desert Shadows Middle and Apache Junction

High schools.

These facilities have been equipped with the more efficient T-8 lighting, 32-rated foam roofing material, dual paned windows, building standard insulation and energy efficient heating and cooling systems, as well as programmable thermostats and energy wise cafeteria appliances.

This is a continuing process and as other district facilities are remodeled or replaced, new technology and energy efficient materials will be included in these facilities in an effort to remain eco-conscious and save taxpayer dollars.

Caution Urged: School Crosswalks

Arizona has very strict laws governing pedestrian safety in school zones. With an increased number of students walking to and from school, it is essential that motorists exercise caution and be knowledgeable about school zone laws.

One of the biggest mistakes motorists make is not waiting for the crossing guard to clear the crosswalk before making a right hand turn.

No right hand turn is lawful while the crossing guard or children are in the intersection.

Whether or not the intersection is signaled, you must come to a stop when signaled by the crossing guard. You can be ticketed for failing to comply.

Other practices that put our students in danger:

- Speeding through residential streets and school zones.

- Failing to yield to students walking or bicycling, especially in crosswalks. (The law requires drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks; it's a law that is often ignored.)

- Running red lights or stop signs.

- Passing stopped school buses.
- Parking or stopping in crosswalks.

The fines for those ticketed for infractions of laws involving school zones are very high. Extra police monitoring and enforcement are currently underway.

Our children's lives are precious. Please help us by driving extra cautiously around all of our local schools!

Reduction In Bus Routes, Field Trips Saves Fuel

Cutting soaring fuel costs and reducing emissions was the impetus behind the approximate 25 percent cut in the daily route miles driven by the district's school bus fleet. This cut also dropped by six the number of school buses and drivers needed in the district's Transportation Dept.

Students living within a one-mile radius of their schools are no longer being

provided bus transport and school bus stops have been reduced and consolidated districtwide.

Out-of-district field trips have been curtailed.

The overall savings in mileage is expected to be about 200,000 miles per year. All of these cuts are expected to keep 2008-2009 AJUSD transportation costs about even with last year's expenses by offsetting the huge jump in fuel prices.

Energy Audit Through Honeywell Grant

An in-depth energy audit is underway at Desert Vista Elementary School through a grant from Honeywell.

According to Associate Superintendent for Business Jim Lockwood, "We're encouraged with what we are doing, but are we satisfied? No. We know that there is much more to learn and will analyze this data collected from DVES and apply it to future planning for the entire district."

Project HELP Gears Up For Holidays

The holidays are closer than you may think and Project HELP is gearing up to help transform those days into pleasant memories for those less fortunate.

Applications for assistance with Thanksgiving will be taken on Tuesday and Thursday between 8:30 and 11 a.m. from October 14 until October 30. Families applying for aid must have at least one child registered and attending school in the AJUSD. Applications for Christmas assistance will be taken on Tuesday and Thursday between 8:30 and 11 a.m. from October 14 through December 4.

Donations of turkeys and other holiday food items should be delivered before November 20 when volun-

teers will be on hand to take your donations each Monday, Wednesday or Friday between 8:30 and noon.

Donations of new goods for Christmas gifts will be accepted at these same times through December 19.

We are unable to accept used items during the holiday season because of space limitations, so we ask that you withhold them between November 12, 2008 and January 27, 2009.

The economy has created difficult economic times for many of our families. If you or your group would like to apply to "adopt" a family for Christmas, please contact Lailoni or Rosie at Project HELP, 480-288-2955.

Helping to brighten the holidays for others is a gift in, and of, itself.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Sept. 24 - Teacher In-service (No School)
- Oct. 6-10 - Fall Break (No School)
- Oct. 14 - Governing Board Meeting (Superstition Mountain Elementary)
- Oct. 23-24 - Parent Teacher Conferences (1/2 Day)