



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SMMUSD Launches Districtwide Continuous Energy Initiative

The Santa Monica-Malibu School District has launched a districtwide Continuous Energy Initiative, an extensive program that focuses on energy saving behavior and is aimed at creating educational opportunities. The Initiative is managed by the Facility Improvement Projects (FIP) department under the direction of Caroline Coster, sustainability coordinator.

The initiative was developed in partnership with Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas and Ecova Inc., a consulting firm that assisted with setting energy goals, targets and numeric baselines.

Coster and Carey Upton, chief operations officer, met with district stakeholders over six months to develop a realistic and specific energy conservation plan. The first part of the initiative focuses on three energy saving behaviors: turning off the lights, closing doors and powering down classroom and office technology at end of day and when not in use. Although these behaviors seem minor and are often overlooked, they can account for 20 percent of energy savings. When coupled with solar installation and LED lighting, this initiative will further enhance the district's energy conservation.

"Our goal with this initiative is to maintain a healthy, sustainable district and encourage all faculty, staff and students to become responsible stewards to protect our natural environment through daily conservation practice," Upton said.

A significant part of the initiative is student involvement and educational opportunities. Coster says this initiative is a valuable learning tool for students who she hopes adopt these habits for life.

"Visual energy tracking tools will be installed and available in classrooms. Educational programs, including student monitoring, committees and energy saving competitions are being developed. If students adopt these daily behaviors while they are young and practice them daily, they will be active participants in reducing energy," Coster said.

The district resolution will be the Strategic Energy Management Plan (SEMP), an exhaustive plan addressing specific energy conservation strategies. Tracking utility consumption and cost is critical to the success of the Continuous Energy Initiative. The SEMP will outline an energy performance baseline, which enables the district to monitor and track progress, identify trends and areas for improvement and target facilities that are consuming elevated amounts of energy.

The plan also addresses the role of staff, students and administration in the conservation plan and ensures costs intended for student learning are not diverted to cover high energy costs. The

SEMP is being finalized and will be presented to the school board in an upcoming school board meeting.

Coster will be providing the district's maintenance and operations staff with checklists to complete to ensure the steps are being taken. All district energy use will be monitored and reported to demonstrate if energy saving goals are being met through the initiative.

"The implementation of this program and plan will greatly benefit all stakeholders and save the district money that can be directed toward student learning," Superintendent Dr. Ben Drati said. "Sustainability and conservation are very important to our school board, district staff and the communities we serve."

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