

## CARLSBAD: School district saves money on utility bills

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[Carlsbad Unified School District](#) officials estimate that they have saved more than \$1 million over the past couple of years on their electric, gas and water bills with the help of an energy-saving program.

That has brought the district about \$550,000 that officials can divert from utility bills to the classroom, said Darin Vey, who oversees the program.

"It's basically steering money from utility companies back into education," he said. "That's the bottom line."

Between March 2009 and August 2011, the district paid roughly \$450,000 for consulting services and other costs associated with the program. That ate into the \$1 million in savings during the same period.

However, the district's four-year contract with Energy Education Inc. will expire in March, which means nearly all of the subsequent savings will end up in its general fund. The services cost about \$140,000 annually.

The \$1 million savings equals a 23 percent reduction in energy costs, which tops the district's original goal of 20 percent.

The program has included installing more efficient lighting, encouraging employees to turn off electronics when they're not being used, working to make air-conditioning systems more effective and adjusting sprinkler systems, among other actions, Vey said.

The savings have increased each year, Vey said, from 19 percent in [2009](#) to 22 percent in [2010](#) and 26 percent this year. By 2014, Vey said, he thinks the district will have reduced spending on energy by 30 percent.

At some point the savings will level off, but Vey said he thinks the number will continue to rise for a while, as more changes are made and as people get better about saving energy.

"It takes a while for people to change habits," he said.

Over the next decade, the changes are expected to cut as much as \$4.5 million from the district's energy spending, officials have estimated.

The savings are particularly important as school officials grapple with a [\\$10.6 million budget shortfall](#) projected for next year, said Devin Vodicka, assistant superintendent in charge of business services.

"Our projected fiscal deficit would be even larger if it were not for the savings that we have realized through this program," he said.

The changes also will have a positive effect on the environment, Vodicka said.