

By Staff Reports

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HUSD TOUTS SAVINGS FROM ENERGY-EFFICIENT UPGRADES

HESPERIA — When students of Hesperia Unified School District returned to school this fall, they found themselves in energy-retrofitted classrooms that in three months time have already saved the district 31 percent in energy costs, district officials say.

Room temperatures and airflow “optimized for learning” were results of the district’s completed energy project to improve building infrastructure and save millions of dollars in future energy costs, according to the district.

With the state’s elimination of deferred maintenance funding and a backlog of significant deferred maintenance two years ago, the HUSD board and staff “took action to solve the district’s infrastructure challenges,” a district news release states.

District staff began by searching for policy approaches, and California Proposition 39 Clean Energy Jobs Act, which allows eligible local education agencies to apply for funds to complete energy efficiency projects and create jobs in their local markets, became one clear option to address the issue.

“The state funding available through Proposition 39 really got this project off the ground,” HUSD Superintendent David McLaughlin said. “Were it not for Prop 39 seed money, we may still be looking at a backlog of deferred maintenance and higher energy bills.”

Through a competitive process last year, HUSD entered into an energy services contract with Climatec, a leading energy retrofitting serve in California schools, who created an Energy Master Plan to address 23 HUSD sites (22 campuses plus the district office).

“HUSD is always looking for innovative ideas to deliver the best education we can for our students,” McLaughlin said. “Cost-effectively creating improved classroom environments while saving energy simply made sense. The district staff and board recognized the benefits of being an early-adopter of Proposition 39 funding and leveraging costs, and we are now seeing the benefits in cost savings and improved learning environments.”

With the help of \$4.7 million in Prop. 39 funding, HUSD implemented an initial phase of work in the amount of \$12.98 million. The balance of the funding was provided primarily through guaranteed energy savings from Climatec and utility rebates.

Hesperia Unified School District Board President Eric Swanson said that HUSD is “excited to be a leader among California school districts using innovation in funding and technology to benefit our students.”

“Any time we, as a Board, can offset our general fund costs and provide a more comfortable environment for our students and teachers, it is a win-win,” Swanson said.

The program’s implementation began in May 2014 and was completed in July 2015. Infrastructure improvements included modernization of over 300 classroom heating and cooling systems, installation of a new districtwide building automation system, motion sensor controls for lighting and HVAC across the district, comprehensive LED lighting retrofits and installation of a computer power management system.

The project is set to address the \$12.98 million in deferred maintenance needs while also delivering an estimated \$400,000 per year in General Fund relief. The 31 percent reduction in energy costs based on a recent trailing three-month report have already exceeded original savings projections.

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