From the Program Manager: Your Communications Plan is Key to District Buy-in

By Fred Byrd
KEEPS Program Manager

If your energy management program is up and running, but your key stakeholders aren’t up to date on program initiatives, then your program’s communications plan might need work.

An effective communications plan entails a well-thought-out process that defines the energy management program’s message, who the message should be delivered to and the most efficient means of deploying the message. As a key component to Step 1 of the energy management process - Make the Commitment - developing a communications plan should be one of the district energy team’s first goals.

Stay on Target

While the energy program’s message remains the same, the communications plan tailors the message to suit each target audience. For example, the school board may want to hear more about the financial benefits of energy management initiatives, while teachers are likely to be more interested in how improved energy performance applies to curriculum. Key stakeholders need to know their specific expectations. If they don't understand why their active participation in the program is important, then they won't contribute. Lack of participation equals lack of
support, which negatively affects the longevity of the program.

**Who Hears the Message?**
The communications plan identifies the key audiences - the primary stakeholders - who have (or should have) the most interest in the district's energy management program. School board, superintendent, faculty, staff, students, the parent teacher association, even community, government and business leaders and especially taxpayers all have a vested interest in your district's energy efficiency initiatives.

**Spread the Word**
Consider all of the communications mechanisms that your school district already has in place - mechanisms that target the specific audiences your communications plan identifies. Everything from district websites and newsletters to classroom announcements and fliers sent home with students can be used to spread the word about best energy management practices and initiatives. Don't hold back on creativity. Energy fairs, competition among classrooms and schools and energy mascots are all ways to generate excitement and awareness about your district's energy management program.

**Best Communications Plan Practices**
Warren County Public Schools branded its energy program as the RACE (Respect And Conserve Energy) program. District energy team members, staff and students are all on the RACE team. The district issues a quarterly online newsletter specifically for the RACE program to inform staff and students about energy conservation initiatives. RACE also sponsors several projects and contests for staff and students throughout the year to raise awareness about energy conservation.

Fayette County Public Schools also branded its energy program as E=USE$^2$ (Education = leads to Understanding Sustainability, Energy and the Environment). The program uses several outreach strategies to provide news and information about program initiatives including a website, newsletter, videos and district-sponsored activities. The program recognizes schools in the district for their energy efficiency efforts and hit the airwaves in March with the FCPS Going Green television show, which airs on FCPS Education TV, Local Channel 13. The show features news about the district's energy program goals.

Let KEEPS Help
Finally, don't forget that KEEPS Regional Coordinators are always here to help you spread the word and be heard.

*Questions? Comments? [Contact KEEPS](#)*
KPPC Named 2011 ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year

The KEEPS program administrator, KPPC - Kentucky Pollution Prevention Center, was selected as one of the 2011 ENERGY STAR award winners for Partner of the Year in Program Delivery. On Tuesday, April 12, KPPC representatives accepted the ENERGY STAR award at a ceremony, which was held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. Each year, ENERGY STAR honors organizations that have made outstanding contributions to protecting the environment through energy efficiency.

ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy that promotes cost savings through the use of energy-saving products and practices. The KEEPS Training System, which helps Kentucky school districts reduce operating costs through improved energy performance is based on ENERGY STAR's seven-step Guidelines for Energy Management.

"KPPC's outstanding accomplishments demonstrate that improved energy performance can benefit the bottom line and protect the environment at the same time," said Jean Lupinacci, director of the ENERGY STAR Commercial and Industrial Branch in the Climate Protection Partnerships Division. "The Center's commitment to smart energy management, its ability to measure and track progress and its effort to communicate the importance of energy efficiency to a wide audience distinguishes KPPC as an industry leader."

KEEPS Webinar Series Kicks off April 20

Beginning April 20, KEEPS will host a series of free webinars that will provide training on how to make the best use of KEEPS tools and other resources, offer information about KEEPS partner organizations and showcase Kentucky school districts that have realized success through the seven-step energy management process. School district energy managers and energy team members are encouraged to attend. All webinars will be held from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET.

Keeping Focus: Energy Efficiency in Kentucky Schools

April 20

Representatives from the Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence will provide information on how Kentucky public schools' energy initiatives fit in with the bigger picture of energy efficiency within the Commonwealth. KEEPS will explain how available resources, such as the KEEPS Project Planning Tool and the KEEPS Energy Management Toolkits can help school districts meet energy management goals.

Registration and more information are available online.

Stakeholder Buy-in

April 27
Learn how effective communications strategies gain support from key stakeholders for energy management program initiatives. Representatives from Warren County Public Schools and Fleming County Public Schools will talk about their districts' internal and external awareness campaigns and share ideas about best communications strategies for districts of all sizes. KEEPS will explain how resources such as KEEPS Energy Management Toolkit 1C: Develop a Communications Plan can help energy programs gain support for program initiatives.

Registration and more information are available online.

**Becoming a Leader in Energy Management**

*May 11*

Recognizing the school district's energy management/efficiency efforts helps sustain momentum and support for the program. Recognition also builds a sense of pride and ownership in the program among staff and students and provides positive public relations for the district. Representatives from Warren County Public Schools and Kenton County Public Schools will discuss how they have applied for and achieved external recognition for their energy management programs - from ENERGY STAR, partnership programs, businesses and other organizations. KEEPS will also discuss its energy efficiency program awards.

Registration and more information are available online.

**From the District to the School Level: Starting Student-led Energy Teams**

*May 25*

Tresine Logsdon, Energy and Sustainability Curriculum Coordinator for Fayette County Public Schools, will talk about her district's efforts to build student-led energy teams. Karen Reagor, Regional Director for the Kentucky NEED Project, and Merin Roseman, Coordinator for Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools, will share information about the extensive, free resources available to help aid the formation of school energy teams and ensure the continued success of already functioning energy teams.

Registration and more information are available online.

**Don't Forget: Earth Day is April 22**

School districts throughout Kentucky will recognize the 41st annual Earth Day on April 22. The occasion provides a great opportunity to showcase school district energy management program initiatives and encourage others to get involved.

See the 2011 [U.S. EPA Earth Day website](http://www.epa.gov/earthday) or the [Earth Day Network website](http://www.earthday.org) for news and information about Earth Day events and initiatives in your area.

Use the [KEEPS KUDOS form](http://www.keeprises.com) to share information about your school district's
Earth Day events. Your Earth Day activities may appear in an upcoming issue of KEEPS Moving Forward, on the KEEPS Facebook Page or on the KEEPS website.

**KEEPS Kudos and Newsmakers**

**Warren County Schools Consume Lunch Without Consuming Energy**
On March 9, each elementary school in the Warren County Public School District participated in an energy-free lunch day to raise awareness about energy consumption. Students ate sandwiches, crackers, fruit and vegetables, and non-essential kitchen equipment - even cafeteria lights - were turned off during lunch. According to Gina Howard, director of district food services and nutrition, school kitchens account for about 22 percent of a school's energy consumption. Energy-free lunch days are also planned for April 27 and May 18.

Read more in the Bowling Green Daily News.

**Energy Efficiency Pays Off for Rowan County Schools**
Thanks to recent energy improvements at Rowan County Senior High School, the Rowan County Public School District earned a $6,000 rebate check from Fleming-Mason Energy. The district was the first in Fleming-Mason's service area to participate in the Energy Lighting Rebate Program, which helped offset the cost of replacing the high school's old lighting system with new, energy-efficient lighting.

Read more in Morehead News Online.

**Mayfield Independent Schools Add a Touch of Green to their Website**

In an effort to raise awareness about school district energy management program initiatives, Mayfield Independent Schools recently dedicated a page on its website to the district's Green Team. The web page highlights program goals, provides details about upcoming district-wide Green Team projects and other energy efficiency resources that promote cost reduction through improved energy performance.

See how "Big Red" goes green on the district's website.

**Kenton County Energy Fair Works the Circuit**

*Kentucky NEED Regional Coordinator Carolyn Bergs gives a demonstration on...*
On March 26, Kenton County Public Schools hosted Work the Circuit - Saving Money Makes Cents energy fair at Turkey Foot Middle School. KEEPS representatives were among the exhibitors who provided information about how to save energy in home and at school and explained how energy efficiency reduces operation costs.

The event featured interactive educational booths that demonstrated the value of energy-efficient and renewable energy resources such as solar, biomass, green roofs and rainwater catchment systems. Participants in the district's energy teams built and raced solar-powered cars. Informational sessions gave attendees the opportunity to learn more about home energy audits, renewable energy, energy efficiency incentives, rebates, tax credits and smart grid technology.

Ten Kentucky School Districts Become ENERGY STAR Partners

Cumberland, Edmonson, Ohio, Hart, Lawrence, Taylor and Trimble county school districts as well as Pineville, Elizabethtown and Campbellsville independent school districts recently became ENERGY STAR partners as part of their energy management programs.

There are now 97 Kentucky K-12 ENERGY STAR Partners, and 90 ENERGY STAR Labeled K-12 facilities across the Commonwealth.

Kentucky NEED Workshop Features Tours of Energy-Efficient Schools

On March 23 and 24, KEEPS representatives were among the more than 100 energy officials, architects and school administrators who toured T.C. Cherry Elementary School and Richardsville Elementary School in Bowling Green as part of the Kentucky National Energy Education Development Project's annual High Performance School Buildings Workshop.

T.C. Cherry was the first school in Kentucky to use solar tubes and won the 2010 Build Kentucky Award. Richardsville Elementary is the nation's first net zero school, meaning that it creates more energy than it uses.

Read more in the Bowling Green Daily News.

Send us your KEEPS Kudos

Has your school or school district realized success through best energy management practices? Great! Use the KEEPS KUDOS form to share the good news, and your KEEPS Kudos may appear in an upcoming issue of KEEPS Moving Forward, on the KEEPS Facebook page or on the KEEPS website.

Events and Training Opportunities

KEEPS Webinar Series

Keeping Focus: Energy Efficiency in Kentucky Schools
April 20
2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET

**Stakeholder Buy-in**
April 27
2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET

**Becoming a Leader in Energy Management**
May 11
2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET

**From the District to the School Level: Starting Student-led Energy Teams**
May 25
2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET

**Kentucky Green & Healthy Schools Annual Summit**
May 18
Frankfort
This annual event showcases projects that schools have completed through the KGHS program. Awards will be given for projects in several categories. See the KGHS website for more information.

**Kentucky NEED Energy Conference and Tour for Educators**
June 13-17
Central Kentucky
The conference will provide teachers with up-to-date information on all aspects of energy including the science of energy, sources of energy, transportation, consumption electricity, efficiency and environmental and economic impacts. Participants will travel via tour bus to energy sites in Central Kentucky to meet energy professionals and receive materials necessary to implement innovative, hands-on energy units for the classroom, multi-disciplinary teams and other programs. Information and registration are available on the Kentucky NEED website.

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KPPC is Kentucky’s primary resource to help businesses, industries and other organizations develop environmentally sustainable, cost-saving solutions for improved efficiency. Based at the University of Louisville’s J.B. Speed School of Engineering, KPPC provides technical information and assistance that is free, confidential and non-regulatory. Information contained in this newsletter is a service of KPPC and is offered solely as a general reference. The University of Louisville, KPPC, their employees, sponsors and all technical sources referred to in this correspondence do not: (a) make any warranty or representation, expressed or implied, with respect to the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of the information; and (b) assume any liabilities with respect to the use of or for damages resulting from and information contained in the correspondence. Mention of trade names, commercial products, or services does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation of use.

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KPPC.

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