

ENERGY EDUCATION – An Important Component in Any Michigan Energy Plan

As the creation of a new Energy Plan for Michigan proceeds there needs to be a goal that addresses the importance of energy education and provides funding for a K-12 public, private and charter schools program plus a program that targets all Michigan citizens to assist them in making informed decisions on energy use and policy. To achieve these goals there are two excellent tools/examples to utilize.

The first is the US Department of Energy's new "Energy Literacy" program, whose goal is to help individuals and communities make informed energy decisions. An Energy Literacy Framework has been developed over the past few years through a series of workshops and an extensive review process involving 13 federal partner agencies including: Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health, Interior, Transportation, EPA, NASA, NSF, and Smithsonian plus many other education partners. With the Energy Literacy Framework now recently completed and in print, work continues involving education partners to advance energy education with audiences that range from "K to Gray".

The DOE defines Energy literacy as understanding the nature and role of energy in the universe and in our lives and the ability to apply this understanding to answer questions and solve problems.

An energy-literate person:

- can trace energy flows and think in terms of energy systems
- knows how much energy he or she uses, for what, and where the energy comes from
- can assess the credibility of information about energy
- can communicate about energy and energy use in meaningful ways
- is able to make informed energy and energy use decisions based on an understanding of impacts and consequences
- continues to learn about energy throughout his or her life

The Michigan Energy Plan should include a mechanism that utilizes this federal program to make energy literacy available to all people in Michigan as a service of the Michigan Energy Office.

The second example is the former **The Michigan Renewable Schools Program**.

The Michigan Renewable Schools Program was a highly successful 2 year, \$3.5 Million program funded by the Michigan Public Service Commission to educate school officials, maintenance personnel, teachers and students about the energy use of their facilities. The program helped implement energy efficiency and renewable energy measures at public, private, and charter K-12 schools throughout the State of Michigan by providing energy studies and incentive funding. Started in 2010, the program provided 67 K-12 schools in Michigan with technical assistance, incentive funding, and resources for energy education including tailored lesson plans, web-based monitoring, and a program display. An additional \$3.5 million was approved for program continuation in 2011 but was cut off 3 months into the third year after a discrepancy was found

by a lobbying organization in the enabling legislation allowing the MPSC to fund the program. The courts ruled the program be shut down, ending 8 full time jobs and leaving 90 schools who had registered to start in the third year without an opportunity to participate in the program.

The Michigan Renewable Schools Program was a coordinated set of programs, including:

- **Energy Efficiency Program:** to implement energy efficiency building upgrades
- **Renewable Energy Program:** to install renewable energy systems, including solar photovoltaic (PV) and/or wind
- **Educational Resources:** to provide teachers with training and resources to make energy efficiency and renewable energy an integral part of their classrooms and school community
- **Post-Secondary Program:** to inspire high school students to pursue continuing education and career pathways in energy efficiency and renewable energy at a Michigan college or university
- **Student Contests & Teacher Grants:** to engage teachers and students in green initiatives that explore the challenges and opportunities of building a sustainable future"

The Michigan Energy Plan should include a stable funding mechanism to re-start the Michigan Renewable Schools Program which has the potential to serve Michigan's 5,000 school buildings, save Michigan schools over \$150 Million annually and begin the process of energy literacy in our K-12 schools.

Energy education should be included as an important component of any future Energy Plan.

Submitted by:

David Konkle, Energy Programs Director
Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority
konkle@toast.net