

# Benchmarking and Goal-Setting: First Steps Towards Big Savings



## Parkway School District, St. Louis, Missouri

**Parkway School District's small steps toward sustainability have led to millions of dollars saved, reduced environmental impact and increased health and wellness in their community.** A public school district in the suburbs of St. Louis county with enrollment of 17,500 students (as of Fall 2019) throughout their 30 schools, Parkway has not only realized these benefits, it has been awarded multiple state and national-level recognitions as a direct result.

### One Step at a Time

A student led push for recycling in the 1990s set in motion a series of conservation efforts that continue to grow. In 2008, the district created a new staff position to manage the operation of their own recycling center. This position went on to initiate many additional sustainability practices, including the tracking of energy and water which began in 2010. In 2018, Parkway set sustainability goals for the whole district, including:

- Reduce energy use 20% by 2025 from a 2015 baseline
- Reduce water use 20% by 2025 from a 2015 baseline
- Divert 70% of waste from landfill

In order to achieve these goals, Parkway began by setting a baseline using a free online tool called ENERGY STAR portfolio manager which they also use to continually track their water and energy usage. They then began implementing energy use protocols and investing in high efficiency machinery. Protocols include timers on computers so that they shut off after a period of inactivity and guidelines for custodial staff on shutting off lights and unnecessary machinery. Many of the high efficiency machines, such as lighting and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units, were able to be purchased through incentives.



*Students reading by natural light during no power hour.*

### Spotlight

Between setting the baseline energy consumption in 2015 and 2020 Parkway District has saved \$2.2 million in energy costs.



It's the common saying, "You can't manage what you don't measure". By benchmarking and goal-setting, you help to create a roadmap to success. Benchmarking allows you to appropriately set your goals and prioritize your efforts and funds where they're needed most. It also gives you a great way to quantify and celebrate your accomplishments while building momentum over time.

**—Hannah Carter (Parkway Sustainability Coordinator)**



Multiple schools with food gardens harvest their produce for use in their daily salad bar. One PSD elementary school also produces enough fresh produce each year to send to the nearby high school for use in district-wide meal preparation

## The Results (as of December 2019)

- Across the district, Parkway has reduced water consumption by 9% from a 2015 baseline.
- Across the district, Parkway has reduced energy consumption by 17% from a 2015 baseline.
- With the implementation of both the composting and recycling programs, Parkway School District was able to cut the amount of landfill dumpsters across the district in half since 2012.

## Expanding the Impact

Not only is Parkway reducing their environmental impact and costs, they are educating students on the environment and sustainable practices, and improving health and wellness at their school. Accomplishing all three of these with depth and excellence qualified Parkway to be recognized as a district honoree of the **U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools** award.

This journey began as a student-led initiative and Parkway is able to use programs like the **Green Schools Quest** to keep students engaged in advancing school sustainability and at the core of their mission. To take things a step further, the district hosts monthly sustainability challenges that engage students and staff and provide cash bonuses to schools that win, and plans to add principles of Education for Sustainability to the guaranteed curriculum framework for all K-12 students.

## About Missouri Green Schools

**Missouri Green Schools** is a recognition and tracking program designed to help Missouri schools improve the health and wellness of students and staff, reduce environmental impact, and incorporate environmental and sustainability education. Schools can see stronger educational outcomes and reduced costs as a result of changes that also help the environment. These changes can happen throughout the school building and grounds, educational programming, and culture.



## Spotlight

As part of the monthly sustainability challenge one school restored an outdoor classroom.



## Interested in partnering with Missouri Green Schools?

The Missouri Green Schools team is here to help you build a healthier, more sustainable future for your students, staff, and community! Learn more at [MissouriGreenSchools.org](https://MissouriGreenSchools.org) or contact us at [mgs@meea.org](mailto:mgs@meea.org).

The following programs for Missouri schools compliment one another; schools may participate in one or all. The school highlighted in this case study has participated in those marked with a check.

- ✓ Missouri Green Schools
- ✓ U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools
- ✓ Green Schools Quest: A Project Based Challenge