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YPSILANTI: Adams Academy finding alternative ways to save energy

Friday, April 1, 2011

By Amy Bell
Heritage Media

Adams Academy will soon be on the cutting edge of alternative energy.

In April, crews will begin installing a solar energy system at the academy of math, science and technology as part of a renewable energy program with Energy Works Michigan. In addition, students will take part by using software to monitor energy production.

Maintenance supervisor Diane Sevigny and Jason Bing of Energy Works Michigan spoke to the Ypsilanti Public Schools Board of Education about the project during its Monday meeting.

Sevigny said the program will not only save on the cost of energy but it will also bring other benefits.

"The value is what our children are going to learn, what they are going to take home to their parents," she said.

Sevigny said the project will save 1 percent of the school's energy costs. The panels are free to the district and require minimal maintenance.

A certified contractor will install the 2.25 kilowatt SolarPV awning along the eastern entrance of the school at 503 Oak St. Bing said that location was chosen because it is out-of-the-way, elevated and tamper proof.

Online monitoring from **SolarYpsi.org**, a grassroots collection of volunteers spearheading alternative energy projects, will allow teachers to show students how the energy is made.

The company will provide professional development for teachers in the fall of next year where they will learn about energy efficiency, solar and wind lessons.

Superintendent Dedrick Martin said what struck him the most about the project was the excitement shown by the principal and teachers because it can be used as a learning experience for the students.

Trustee Kira Berman said she was thrilled with the project.

"I think it's been a long time coming to see renewable energy plans in Ypsilanti," she said.

Berman asked how the solar panels would function when covered with snow. She said this has been an issue with gathering solar energy in Michigan.

Bing said the awnings do a very good job of discharging the snow because of the angles of the panels and wind.

Rooftop installations are the most troublesome, especially when it comes to systems located on the west side of the state, he said.

School board president David Bates, who also is a middle school science teacher, said he was jealous of the Academy, especially because his students are beginning a weather unit.

"I think the ability to monitor the power output online in real time is just fabulous, what a terrific instructional tool," he said.

As part of the program, teachers are offered grants for ideas to integrate sustainability into their classrooms. Students are encouraged to take part in various contests designed to promote sustainability. Green jobs training is available to high school students.

The project is part of the Michigan Renewable Schools program administered through the Michigan Public Service Commission. Part of the funding comes from the low-income energy efficiency fund which designates a small part toward the Green Education Fund used in schools throughout the state.

Energy Works has 39 schools in its energy efficiency program and 27 taking part in its renewable energy initiatives. In Washtenaw County, Rudolf Steiner High School in Ann Arbor and Rudolf Steiner Lower are taking part in the programs.

For more information on **SolarYpsi.org**, see **here**

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