



School Dist:.....Pinehurst  
Project Type:.....Lighting Retrofit  
Stimulus Funds: ...\$23,757  
Savings/yr: .....\$1,700

## Two-room school demonstrates Oregon pioneer spirit

*Oregon public schools are challenged as never before for operating funds. The Oregon Department of Energy provided more than \$11 million in stimulus funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) to 60 school districts throughout the state for*



*energy projects. One recipient, Pinehurst School in Southern Oregon, has been feeling the economic pinch since the community mill closed in 1969. The tiny rural school district installed new energy efficient lighting with a \$23,757 Recovery Act grant from the Oregon*

*Department of Energy that will save an estimated \$1,700 in electricity costs every year. That is enough to make a difference.*

At the top of a mountain, surrounded by tall timber along the Applegate spur of the Oregon Trail is a two-room red schoolhouse that has stood the test of time. Twenty-three students—kindergartners through 8<sup>th</sup> graders—attend the 81-year-old Pinehurst School located between Ashland and Klamath Falls on Highway 66. The part-time superintendent, two teachers and two aides operate on a \$550,000 budget. The superintendent has a corner office – in the school library. There are no school buses. The capital improvement budget for 2010-11 was \$1,000.

But don't feel sorry for this public school. Pinehurst School has a pioneer spirit and traditions that many richer school districts would envy. At Pinehurst School every student has a speaking role in the winter performance. It plays to a packed audience. Then, there is the festival of the arts when students read an original poem or short story, display a drawing or other creative endeavor, again to a large community audience.

Every Friday night is family movie night at the school as the trip down the mountainside can be treacherous, especially during winter. There's no Y or athletic club, so kids and entire families come and play ball in the school gym after hours on the weekend or whenever they want.

"I love these kids," said Superintendent Russ Branson, a retired special education teacher who has been in education 37 years and with Pinehurst for three years. "The older kids mentor the younger ones. It's a special place, and the community is phenomenal."

Where else does a community person write a check to build an annex that holds a large meeting room? Where does another community member donate \$7,000 for the upper graders to go to Yosemite for a week of outdoor school? Where does a community person walk in to school one day with 10 large boxes filled with laptop computers – one for each 5-8<sup>th</sup> grade student – that they can check out and take home? Where do people contribute to build a room off the gym where students can throw a pot, paint on tiles or make a quilt? Where do volunteers paint the school interior with donated paint?

"These people care," said Branson.

As does Branson. Knowing that the lights throughout the school needed upgrading and would be virtually impossible to accomplish on an annual capital fund budget of \$1,000, he applied for an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus funds) energy grant of \$23,757 with the Oregon Department of Energy in early 2010. Branson was pleased when Pinehurst got the grant, but the school board was skeptical. They didn't want some harsh neon-looking light fixtures to deter from the 1934 historic structure.

**"It's a special place and the community is phenomenal,"**  
- Russ Branson  
Pinehurst Superintendent



With the help of the contractor, Brian Day Electric of Medford, and lighting project consultants, Mark Mazurie and Darren Lee with Willamette Education Services District of Salem, a lamp fixture was selected that provided modern T-8 fluorescent light with an appropriate style fixture for the age of the building.

The results have been well received. The light fixtures contribute to the historic feel of the building and provide other benefits as well.

“Number one is safety,” said Branson. “Our gym lights use to hang mid-height on the wall and had cages that had broken over the years. When a kid kicked a ball and inadvertently hit one of those lights, there was an explosion and lots of broken glass. It really concerned me.”

The new gym light fixtures are also caged, but located on the high ceiling, far away from an errant ball.

Another safety concern was in the library where lamps were perched atop the book shelves with extension cords to add needed light. When the new lights were installed, Branson was the first to remove the lamps that posed a safety hazard.



In addition, the old lights flickered and made a buzzing noise distracting some students. Erin Linton, a Pinehurst graduate and now a classroom aide, said her migraine

headaches are gone now that they have the new lights. “It is a much nicer light,” Linton said.

The new lights make it easier to find storage items in the basement. “Before we had a few bare incan-



**Pinehurst Superintendent Russ Branson (left) confers with Shanda Shribbs, Oregon Department of Energy Project Manager, concerning some of the documentation required for the new school lights installed with Recovery Act funds.**

descent light bulbs scattered throughout the storage room,” said Branson. “You couldn’t really see much.”

Other benefits of the lighting project: The new lights are expected to save approximately \$1,700 per year in electricity charges. “That pays for our part-time librarian,” Branson said.

“We never could have done this project without the stimulus funds,” said Branson. “It was a one time opportunity to upgrade our lighting. The kids and parents are so proud of this school.”

What’s next for Pinehurst? Because of their limited budget, the Pinehurst School Board is considering a four-day school week for next school year.

“I just can’t go to a four-day week,” Branson said. “Kids learning to read need to be here five days a week.”

Pinehurst has more challenges ahead and will need to rely on their pioneer spirit.

The Pinehurst School Foundation compiled a charming book about the school, To read excerpts, visit: [www.pinehurst.k12.or.us/stories-of-pinehurst](http://www.pinehurst.k12.or.us/stories-of-pinehurst)

The Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) awarded this energy project with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) funds through the State Energy Program. These funds are designated for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. The U.S. Department of Energy administers the funds, approves the projects and reviews the state’s progress. The Oregon Department of Energy received \$42.1 million in SEP funding. All projects must be completed by February 15, 2012.

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# How small Oregon school districts can find funds for energy projects

Small Oregon school districts have been feeling the budget pinch for years. And, like school districts throughout Oregon, smaller schools have many older facilities.

According to the US Department of Energy (US DOE), schools spend more on energy than any other expense except personnel. The US DOE Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Building Technologies Program also notes that energy is one of the few expenses a school district can reduce without sacrificing educational quality.

What help is available for Oregon schools (small or large) that want to reduce their energy use?

**Stimulus funds** - The Oregon Department of Energy has awarded 60 school districts throughout Oregon with stimulus (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds for energy projects. While there are no funding opportunities at this time, the Oregon Department of Energy is using some stimulus funds to conduct energy audits of schools that do not receive public purpose funds (see following Senate Bill 1149 section). The School Audit Initiative is scheduled to begin April 2011.

**Qualified School Construction Bonds** - The stimulus (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds created a new category of tax credit bonds for the construction, rehabilitation, or repair of public school facilities and for the acquisition of land on which a public school facility will be constructed. The bonds are designed to be zero-interest and help provide a

significant cost savings to school districts for capital improvement. Oregon received nearly \$110 million for this funding. [www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/FederalFunding/Stimulus/School-Bonds/BondDescriptions.aspx](http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/FederalFunding/Stimulus/School-Bonds/BondDescriptions.aspx)

**Schools spend more on energy than any other expense except personnel.**

*- US Department of Energy*

**Schools Team** - The Oregon Department of Energy has a Schools Team that is available to assist Oregon schools with accessing available funding to implement energy-efficiency projects. Contact the Oregon Department of Energy at (503) 378-4040 or toll-free at 1-800-221-8035 and ask for the

Schools Team.

**Senate Bill 1149** - The Oregon Department of Energy administers this public purpose funds



program. The Senate Bill 1149 program pays for 100 percent of eligible energy efficiency projects. Schools qualify by being customers of Portland General Electric or Pacific Power. Funding is

based on student enrollment and comes in monthly until 2025. Qualified schools are allotted funding for energy efficiency improvements in existing instructional buildings. Contact the Oregon Department of Energy at **(503) 378-4040** or **toll-free at 1-800-221-8035**.

**Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC)** - The Oregon Department of Energy oversees the BETC program that covers a percentage of the eligible cost of a conservation or renewable energy project. Projects must be pre-approved. Since public schools do not have a tax liability, the BETC has a pass-through option that schools can use to receive a cash payment and transfer their tax credit eligibility to an eligible third party. Contact the Oregon Department of Energy at (503) 378-4040 or toll-free at 1-800-221-8035.

**Energy Loan Program** - Schools are eligible to apply for a low-interest, long-term, fixed-rate Energy Loan through the Oregon Department of Energy. Loans can be structured around anticipated SB 1149 payments and/or estimated energy savings. Contact the Oregon Department of Energy at (503) 378-4040 or toll-free at 1-800-221-8035.

**Energy Trust of Oregon** has the following service and cash incentives for schools located in service territories of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and Cascade Natural Gas. These services and incentives can be utilized only after 1149 funds have been exhausted. Call the Energy Trust directly at 1-866-368-7878.

**Comprehensive energy assessments** - The Energy Trust pays for energy assessments to identify energy-efficiency opportunities, analyze their energy impact and cost-effectiveness. These assessments can be coordinated through the ODOE Schools Team.

**Cash incentives** - Energy Trust offers cash incentives for qualifying energy projects up to a maximum \$500,000 per year. Projects must be pre-approved.

**Bonneville Power Administration** offers energy audits and incentives for energy-efficiency projects that save electricity for schools located in service areas served by public utilities, municipal district and electric cooperatives. Schools may qualify for cash rebates of up to 70 percent of some energy projects. Call your local public utility, municipal district or electric coop and ask specifically about Bonneville Power Administration audits and incentives.

