

Nestled on top of a hill bordering a reservoir, Terryville High School stands overlooking a scenic town, where country life meets suburban houses. With the construction of our new high school out of our way, it was only a matter of time before we started to focus our attention on going green. Two thousand and nine was a year of change for Terryville High School; not only did we start in a new school, but we started a new initiative as well. Momentum has grown from one light bulb to a massive shut down of all electronics involving both students and staff. Before our school committed itself to conservation, the unbridled energy usage paired with ignorance for environmental stresses was wreaking havoc on the system. Should we have continued this energy spree, tons of carbon dioxide emissions would be released into the air as waste. Although we may not be saving the world by ourselves, we are starting small with turning electronics off and saving electricity one day at a time.

Our initiative to conserve energy begins with the cooperation of staff and students, who are attempting to change their ways in order to help out the environment. One group effort that has changed the high school's routine is the "Holiday Shutdown." This is a united endeavor that the teachers take part in at 2:17 on the day right before a vacation starts. Each teacher has a checklist that they must complete in order to show that all electronics are turned off and appropriately stored for the holidays. Tasks range from something as simple as turning the lights off to something as major as unplugging all electronic equipment including kitchen appliances in the foods rooms, computers and overhead projectors in the classrooms, and anything else that can be unplugged. Many electronics use energy even if they are turned off, and although it may only be a small amount of energy being drained by each appliance, a school filled with vampire electronics can waste massive amounts of electricity. For the sake of our school, every teacher, from the science department to the English department, has become more aware of their actions

and remembers that even though it may take them more time to leave the school before the holidays; they are making a difference for the environment and setting an example for others.

Whether it's seen or unseen to the ordinary student, green changes are being made around the school. For example, the school custodians set the parking lot lights to turn on only as the sun goes down, operating between the hours of 5 and 11pm. By turning the parking lights off when they are not needed, the school is harnessing the power of the sun to light up the school. Large, open windows dominate the face of the building, again using the power of the sun to light the way from the inside out and thus ending the need for artificial lighting on sunny days. We were also able to cut back on our use of heating oil, which releases a number of harmful gases into the air when burned. Instead of keeping the boiler on at all times, the temperature is decreased when the school is not in use to around 55-60 degrees. They increase their output just before school starts to temperature of about 68-72 degrees so that no unnecessary warm-up time is being used. The fruits of these efforts are apparent in the 7,035 gallons of fuel oil we were able to save from 2009 to 2010.

To our astonishment, in the time space of only sixteen months these simple changes have brought astronomical results to our building. Just six months from our starting point in May, 2009, our school was able to save 245 MMBTU (million British Thermal units), the equivalent of 24 metric tons of carbon dioxide out of the earth's atmosphere. That may sound like a lot, but by November of 2010 we were able to lift 132 metric tons of carbon dioxide off of Mother Nature's shoulders! If the numbers do not impress, then picture taking 24 passenger cars off the road for one year, or growing 3,369 tree seedlings for ten years. If we can do this by ourselves, imagine what we accomplish with \$20,000!

Although we may be a small school of only around 500 students, we have made progress

that has changed the way we think about the environment. If we can increase our impact on the environment this much in just one year, imagine what we can do with \$20,000 in five years. We have grown from no environmentally conscious actions to a school with a holiday shutdown plan that helps the environment. With the \$20,000 we can build a greenhouse to use the waste from our cafeteria as compost instead of throwing it out and teach the students about creating a more environmentally friendly living space both in school and at their own homes. The greenhouse can also supply vegetables to our foods classes so that they can save money and live more earth-friendly than genetically altered vegetables that are covered with pesticides. Greenhouses also use excessive carbon dioxide that is in our air and exchange it for oxygen, thus helping the ozone layer and creating a better environment for the world as a whole. With one small change snowballing into a million small changes at Terryville High School, imagine how \$20,000 will grow our small changes into one big change.