

APEC – Southern Illinois

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The Energy Leaders of Tomorrow are in our Schools Today!

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The recent energy legislation signed into law by Gov. Pritzker has brought even more focus (in the public's eye) as to how renewable energy sources are our future. Those who will, in large part, be the future leaders and "implementers" of the necessary initiatives to make Illinois carbon neutral are in our schools today.

Illinois schools are part of a nationwide initiative that provides training to K-12 students in Energy Efficiency methods and how renewable energy is our future. Leading this effort is the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation through its K-12 Solar and Wind Schools Grant program. Participating schools opt to receive either a small-scale (1-5kW) wind turbine or a 1 kW solar photovoltaic system, with roughly 90% of the equipment and installation costs covered by grant monies. To date, 14 schools have participated in the wind program and over 400 in the solar program.

Requirements to receive the grant monies are:

- The wind turbine or photovoltaic panel installation must be placed on school grounds and visible to students and the general public.
- The school (or district) must organize and hold an event for the public to announce the completion of the wind turbine or photovoltaic panel installation and to highlight renewable energy and environmental opportunities.
- The school must incorporate the concepts and data from the wind turbine or photovoltaic panel installation into at least one STEM-related class syllabus. ICECF provides teacher training workshops and has free online training materials and links to outside resources via downloads on the Illinois Solar Schools/Illinois website. These are available for the entire range of K-12 classroom settings.

Many districts use these as a “pilot program” to determine the viability of much larger future installations for offsetting a significant percentage of their monthly Electric bill. Of course, it’s always important to do all possible Energy Efficiency projects first, especially if trying to zero out usage with a sizable renewables installation!

For more information about these opportunities available to schools, try the links below.

<https://www.illinoiscleanenergy.org>

<http://www.illinoissolarschools.org/solar-schools/>

<http://energyseeds.org/category/solar-schools/illinois/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Illinois-Solar-Schools-629152307195038/>

<http://www.illinoissolarschools.org/teacher-resources/teaching-solar/>

<http://www.illinoissolarschools.org/teacher-resources/teaching-wind/>