

# The Courier

FINDLAY - HANCOCK COUNTY - NORTHWESTERN OHIO

Ohio – National Recognition

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## City School Buildings Earn ENERGY STARS

By Kathryn Rubright

All of Findlay City Schools' eligible school buildings received ENERGY STAR certification in 2017.

To become certified by the Environmental Protection Agency, a building must have better energy performance than 75 percent of similar buildings.

The Washington Building was not eligible because it was a mixed-use building, said Sean Swisher, the district's Cenergistic representative. Since the administration has moved out and Washington is solely a school building, it can be certified in 2018 if it meets requirements.

The school board approved a contract with Cenergistic in July 2014 in an effort to conserve energy and money.

The other buildings ranked in the following percentiles: Bigelow Hill Intermediate, 91; Chamberlin Hill Intermediate, 75; Donnell Middle School, 84; Findlay High School, 91; Glenwood Middle School, 88; Jacobs Primary, 95; Jefferson Primary, 95; Lincoln Elementary, 86; Millstream Career Center, 86; Northview Primary, 88; Whittier Primary, 91; and Wilson Vance Intermediate, 77.

The application process involved Swisher gathering detailed information about each building, including square footage, number of rooms and the number of light bulbs in each room.

The district also had to make sure it had a long enough history of utility bills to show it was saving money, Swisher said.

Cenergistic looked over the information and agreed that the district was ready to apply for ENERGY STAR certification.

A third-party engineer or architect then visited each building to collect data on lighting levels, temperatures and carbon dioxide levels.

"We walked through every single building and they took different things like lighting levels, temperature readings, (carbon dioxide) levels, to make sure we're still getting ventilation in all the classrooms," Swisher said.

The process ensures that energy savings aren't coming at the cost of having students learn in dark, cold or unventilated environments, he said.

From start to finish, it took more than a year to get certification, Swisher said.

Shutting down buildings efficiently during fall, winter and spring breaks and over the summer is one key to savings.

"We go into total shutdown, which means if there's something plugged into an outlet that you can reach, it gets unplugged for that week," Swisher said.

The heat is turned down to about 55 degrees for breaks during cooler months.

Day-to-day habits like turning lights off, and knowing the quirks of each building, also matter.

Using temperature readings taken every 10 minutes, Swisher knows that "some of the buildings we can fire up at 7:08, and by 7:25 they go from 62 degrees to 72, where some of your older buildings, you know, we may need to start those at 6 o'clock in the morning."

The district has saved about \$600,000, as of Swisher's most recent update to the school board on Oct. 2. Most of the savings have been on electricity use.

"Findlay City Schools really has bought into the program and done a great job, and that's not how it is country-wide. There's a lot of pushback. Some of the schools down south, they want their air conditioning on 24/7," said Swisher, who twice a year attends two national training conferences where he hears about other districts.

He said the ENERGY STAR certification lets taxpayers know the district is doing whatever it can "to run their buildings effectively and efficiently and they're not, you know, overspending by any stretch of the imagination when it comes to the utility side."

"The bottom line is that cost containment," said Superintendent Ed Kurt when asked what the certification means for Findlay City Schools. "The better job we can do with that, the more money we can put back into the classroom."