

IT'S SO MUCH MORE THAN AN ENERGY PROJECT

With The ECG Group's new "Student Engagement Program," you can give your students a robust, hands-on opportunity to participate in our nation's movement to end climate change.



By Dr. Charles Russo, Director of Student Engagement, The ECG Group

"Yes, we are failing, but there is still time to turn everything around—we can still fix this. I want you to act as if the house was on fire. Because it is."

- Greta Thunberg

Across the world, young people are standing up and raising their voices to call out you, me, and today's decision-makers to ask, "Why don't you care? Why are you not taking action to protect and preserve our home?"

In fact, a recent Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll surveyed a nationally representative sample of 629 teenagers, and many consider climate change one of the biggest issues facing their generation. Sixty-one percent of teens listed climate change as an "extremely" or "very" important issue to them.*

More action is needed to protect our planet, and students are rising and demanding change because we are not acting fast enough. But we can, and we must. And what's more, we can use what we know as educators, administrators and facility managers to address climate change while also helping the next generation of leaders to find their path and fulfill their vision of a better world as well as healthier, more sustainable schools. And Energy Performance Contracts (EPCs) can provide the key.

With the average reduction in energy consumption being 30%, and with no out-of-pocket costs or reliance on aid from the State, EPCs are a powerful tool that can not only help you solve fiscal challenges, but also engage students in a meaningful initiative that will have an enormous environmental impact.

Acting as the school district's technical owner's representative and advocate during your Energy Performance Contract, The ECG Group takes a unique approach to EPCs, blending technology, engineering, science, math, and environmental education to create a meaningful and lasting educational experience.

I am pleased to announce ECG's new "Student Engagement Program," which is grounded in three principles:

1. Give them a Voice

The most critical goal of every EPC project should be to provide an environment that meets the needs of the people that will live and learn in the space. Students and staff members know their situation best, and by engaging them in the process, they can provide in-depth and detailed guidance through collaborative work with engineers and other professionals, ensuring that the student and staff voices are heard and answered.

2. Involve them in the Process

EPCs can inspire a fertile, real-life STEM curriculum. These unique projects enable students to get an opportunity to get direct access to engineers, energy consultants, and contractors, giving feedback and participating in an on-sight work-study project in environmental conservation.

3. Leverage the Learning Opportunity

Whether their motivation is an interest in energy efficiency, engineering, or reducing one's carbon footprint, EPCs provide all students with a meaningful and rewarding educational experience.

The rise in environmental consciousness amongst our youth presents a unique opportunity to not only engage students in bettering their schools, their minds, and our planet, but also to drive stronger results. Research shows that when students and staff are involved in energy conservation initiatives, they feel greater ownership, and are therefore more apt to support changes over the long-term and adopt behaviors that drive deeper savings.

Energy performance contracts are not "just another project." They are a unique opportunity to achieve multiple goals: from creating healthier, more efficient buildings, to providing well-rounded and engaging educational opportunities that last a lifetime, and beyond.

Dr. Charles (Chuck) Russo has over 38 years of experience in education that included 15 years as a Superintendent of Schools. He was president of the Suffolk County School Superintendent's Association and SCOPE Education Services. Chuck is recently retired and is now ECG's Director of Student Engagement, leading the new "Student Engagement Program."

The ECG Group is a Diamond Partner of The Council and stands as the trusted, independent partner that seamlessly manages and leads energy performance contracts so school districts can be confident their energy-saving initiatives result in fiscally-responsible environment improvements and a world-class educational setting. Contact Chuck Russo at CRusso@theECGgroup.com or 631.360.0006 to learn more information about how your district can initiate an EPC with a rich student engagement component. You can also go to www.TheECGGroup.com.

* Arianna Prothro "Teenagers See Climate Change as a Threat, But Aren't as Clear on Its Causes" Education Week, December 20, 2019