



CAHOKIA SCHOOL DISTRICT SEALS IN SAVINGS WITH BUILDING ENVELOPE UPGRADES

As buildings grow older and budgets shrink, many school districts are faced with a dilemma when it comes to which upgrades to make — and when. Such was the case in Cahokia.

“Our buildings are older and in need of upgrades, but the school district’s finances guide what you can and can’t do,” says Ciara Corley, Director of Finance for the Cahokia School District, which helps prepare 3,500 students for their future. Beyond basic building code compliance, “we try to make strategic improvements where they are needed the most.”

But in the summer of 2020, Ameren Illinois offered a unique opportunity to make energy-saving building envelope improvements to all 11 Cahokia school buildings at a drastically reduced cost to the district.

“Buildings are usually tight when they are built, but over time they shift and settle, creating cracks and gaps in the shell of the building. That air leakage costs money,” says Jim Dillon, Senior Manager, Energy Efficiency Operations at Ameren Illinois. “We offer incentives to help schools, businesses and other organizations reduce the size of those gaps and open the door to energy savings.”

The only hurdle was the skepticism of school administrators.

“We were aware that some areas in our buildings were not airtight and had talked about weatherization measures before. But the offer from Ameren Illinois sounded too good to be true, so it took a bit more convincing for us to give the green light,” says Corley.

Once they did, a team from Building Envelope Solutions, an Ameren Illinois Program Ally, sprang into action. Using a variety of tools and techniques, these building science experts completed a thorough inspection of each building, checking for gaps and cracks as small as a pinhole around windows, doors and where ceilings meet walls. Over a five-day period, the Program Ally then sealed these air leaks using caulk, spray foam, and flashing.

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Grade-A Savings

Ameren Illinois can help educational facilities — from K-12 schools to universities — cut annual energy costs and improve learning environments. Cash incentives are available for a variety of energy efficiency projects, including:

- » No-cost/low-cost energy efficiency improvements
- » Lighting upgrades
- » Heating and cooling system improvements
- » Commercial kitchen equipment upgrades
- » Motor upgrades
- » Steam system improvements
- » Custom projects — including building envelope sealing

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— Jim Dillon,
Ameren Illinois



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The National Institute of Standards and Technology estimates that air leaks account for one-third of commercial and industrial buildings' energy use, so the building envelope can be a significant source of savings. Beyond the discomfort they cause, drafts in a building can lead to increased energy usage, as people dial the thermostat up in the winter and down in the summer to regulate the temperature. Ameren Illinois can connect you with cash incentives and qualified contractors to tighten the building envelope and seal in savings.



Their work in Cahokia was completed during summer when school was not in session. However, when needed, Ameren Illinois Program Allies are prepared to work after-hours to minimize disruption for students, customers, or staff.

By sealing the building envelope and reducing energy loss, the Cahokia School District will save an estimated \$25,000 a year — money that will make a difference for students.

“Our vision is to hire more teachers’ aides,” notes Corley. “The money we saved working with Ameren Illinois will allow us to hire another aide to better engage students and bring the student-teacher ratio down.”

“Building envelope projects are a viable source of savings for any facility more than five years old — and our Custom incentives could cover more than half of your project costs,” says Dillon.

“Ameren Illinois is proud to help schools and non-profits put more money toward their mission.”

“I would definitely recommend their Energy Efficiency Programs to other organizations — the cost savings are immense.”

— Ciara Corley
Cahokia School District

Beyond cost savings, the building envelope improvements have created a more comfortable learning environment. The difference will perhaps be felt most in the high school cafeteria, where drafts once drove students away from a comfy café lounge area. In winters to come, students will be less likely to rush through lunch.

From the cafeteria to the classrooms, new LED lighting only adds to the improved learning environment.

“The LED bulbs provide a better quality of light. It’s brighter and makes everything look fresh and clean,” says Corley. “With well-lit classrooms, students will be able to see their work better.”

In addition to a cash incentive for the district’s building envelope upgrades, Ameren Illinois provided a \$20,000 incentive to reduce the district’s cost of installing the new lighting.

“We did not have the funds to make these upgrades, so we really appreciate the help from Ameren Illinois,” says Corley. “I would definitely recommend the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program to other organizations — the cost savings are immense.”

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