

An “A” for Efficiency: School District Saves With Strategic Energy Management



From Pre-K through high school, Champaign Unit #4 School District aims to empower learners to thrive in a diverse and changing world. In our mission to empower customers through energy efficiency, the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program helped the school district create comfortable, cost-effective learning environments that serve students (and taxpayers) well.

Building Awareness

After successfully partnering with Ameren Illinois on energy-saving projects in the past, the district took things to a new level in 2018 as the first school district to participate in the utility’s Strategic Energy Management (SEM) program. With new construction projects and massive renovations underway at several of the district’s 18 school buildings, it was an ideal time to take a fresh look at energy usage and incorporate efficiency into building upgrades.

“Strategic Energy Management helps organizations dig deeper to improve energy efficiency,” says Jim Dillon, Senior Manager, Energy Efficiency Operations at Ameren Illinois. “Our SEM program had traditionally been used by large industrial customers, but it can be a valuable tool for large school systems as well.”

Ameren Illinois’ SEM program features a two-part incentive structure (worth up to \$30,000 over a two-year period) that rewards energy savings, as well as performance related to executive sponsorship, assessment, goal-setting and communications.

At the heart of the SEM concept is a dedicated team that meets monthly to discuss energy usage and ways to save. Ameren Illinois Energy Advisors sit in on meetings during the first year to help identify opportunities and incentives, answer questions and move projects forward.

SEM in Action

Richard McQueen, Director of Maintenance and Facilities for Champaign Unit #4 School District and leader of the SEM team, was happy to save a seat at the table for Energy Advisor Rod Rhoads every month.

THE POWER OF SEM

- » Gain a comprehensive understanding of energy use at your facility.
- » Integrate energy efficiency into standard operating procedures.
- » Ensure an accurate cost allocation of energy.
- » Identify project opportunities.
- » Reduce energy costs.
- » Achieve sustainability goals.

Learn more at

[AmerenIllinoisSavings.com](https://www.amerenillinois.com/savings).



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— Richard McQueen, Champaign #4 School District



Grade-A Savings

The Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program 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
- » **ENERGY STAR®** commercial kitchen equipment upgrades
- » Lighting occupancy sensors and networked lighting controls
- » Motor upgrades
- » Steam system improvements
- » Aerators and water-saving devices
- » Retro-commissioning
- » Custom projects

“Ultimately, the goal is to embed energy efficiency into the culture and the conversation.”

— Jim Dillon, Ameren Illinois



READY TO BEGIN?

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1.866.800.0747

“Rod was super responsive and super involved. He introduced us to programs and ideas to reduce the district’s energy use,” says McQueen. “If I would have had to research this information myself, we probably would have missed out on several opportunities.”

The district’s SEM team identified numerous ways to save at multiple schools, including HVAC and lighting upgrades, custom projects for boilers and cafeteria equipment as well as variable frequency drives to help motors operate more efficiently.

Beyond the obvious financial benefits of SEM, the new lighting and HVAC upgrades have made classrooms more comfortable and conducive to learning.

“Upgrading those old fluorescent T12 lights to LEDs has completely transformed the hallways and classrooms,” says McQueen. “The new lighting creates a warm, bright and inviting environment. The difference is amazing.”

Creating Sustainable Change

The rewards of Strategic Energy Management can be substantial in terms of bottom-line benefits and environmental impact. The Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program incentives offer up-front savings that make upgrades more affordable.

In fact, between 2017 and 2021, the school district’s energy efficiency projects qualified for more than \$500,000 in Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program incentives. Projects completed through 2021 generated more than \$150,000 in annual energy savings, with more to come.

“We are now able to keep classrooms comfortable while reducing energy use. Even though the district added roughly 200,000 square feet to its buildings in recent years, we have seen a pretty significant decrease in energy costs,” says McQueen. “The money the district is saving can be put directly back into classrooms and other school programs.”

“Strategic Energy Management empowers organizations to create lasting change in awareness, attitudes and processes,” says Dillon. “Ultimately, the goal is to embed energy efficiency into the culture and the conversation.”

That is exactly what happened in District #4, where the energy efficiency conversation continues. McQueen credits the Strategic Energy Management program as a game-changer for the district, thanks in no small part to Energy Advisor Rod Rhoads.

“This process — and Rod’s guidance and help — was the number one factor in the district receiving the incentive dollars and energy savings that we did,” says McQueen. “I would recommend the Ameren Illinois Strategic Energy Management program. It’s a great program, and it’s helping our school district be responsible to taxpayers as well as the environment.”



Energy Efficiency
PROGRAM