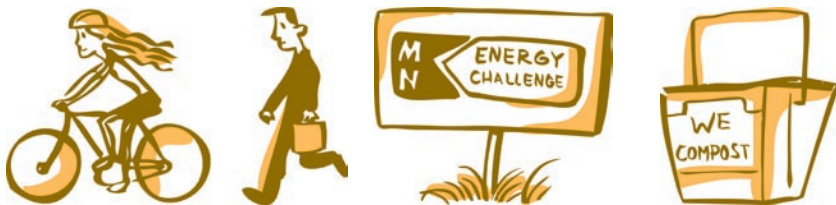




# The Minnesota Energy Challenge: A Guide for Students and Teachers

Looking for a fun “green” project, an Earth Day activity or a way to challenge rival schools? Check out the Minnesota Energy Challenge!



The cool thing about energy efficiency and conservation is that *everyone* can make a difference – no matter your age, income or ability. You can use the Energy Challenge program at your school to help spread the word about energy efficiency, get everyone excited and show them the real impact of their actions!

## What is the Minnesota Energy Challenge?

The Minnesota Energy Challenge is a website ([mnenergychallenge.org](http://mnenergychallenge.org)) where you can find in-depth information on energy efficiency and

conservation, join teams and see how much you can save! The Energy Challenge is provided by local nonprofit Center for Energy and Environment, an organization with thirty years of technical experience.

Schools can use the Minnesota Energy Challenge **to provide information** on energy efficiency and conservation to students, teachers and parents. You can also use the Energy Challenge website **to track a team's total savings** and get an idea of the real world impact of your actions.



Como Park High - Green Eyez Environmental Club

## Why Energy Efficiency and Conservation?

When people take action, they like to see results. Some sustainable actions – like using reusable bags or signing up for wind power – don't have any immediate visible results. Energy efficiency and conservation help lower utility bills, and the Energy Challenge tracks the savings so people can see what their actions do and how much they can save.

Over half of the greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota come from residents – in the form of the electricity and natural gas we use in our homes and the gasoline we use to power our cars. This means that Minnesota residents have a remarkable opportunity to make a real difference in Minnesota and save money at the same time.

**FREE Energy Challenge Materials and Resources**

Fliers

Customized paper forms

Buttons

Team posters

Sample presentations

Sample articles

Customized widgets for your website

FREE presentations by Energy Challenge coordinator Neely Crane-Smith

Advice and brainstorming

## Successful Energy Challenge Campaigns

While the Minnesota Energy Challenge makes total sense to you, people fear change. In order to run a successful Energy Challenge campaign in your school, it will need to include the following three essential elements:

A Story

A Sense of Humor

A Celebration!

### A Story

You'll need to tell people *why* they should care about the Minnesota Energy Challenge. The best way to do this is to weave a story around the campaign. How can you tell a story about your school's involvement in the Energy Challenge that engages people and helps them to pay attention?

*Set specific goals*, like signing up 100 households on your Energy Challenge team or pledging to save enough energy to "zero out" your building's greenhouse gas emissions. Then you can track your progress and keep the school updated on how well you are doing. Utilizing a time limit to your campaign will be to your advantage, so set your campaign for one month, three months or a semester.

## A Sense of Humor

When it comes to talking about climate change, people are often bombarded with disaster scenarios that are overwhelming. Don't take your Energy Challenge campaign too seriously. Have some fun with it! When people laugh, they feel better and they learn better. This could mean creating a competition or a game out of the Energy Challenge campaign.

## A Celebration!

Once you have completed your Energy Challenge campaign and have reached the end of your designated story, throw a party! Send a thank you email, put up posters and signs, have a special announcement in the school newspaper and let people know that something special happened.

## How Do We Sign People Up for the Energy Challenge?

In order to track your team's savings on the Energy Challenge, you will need to do two things: Create a team and help people sign up for it. You can easily request a team on the Team page by clicking "start a team."



While people can join the Energy Challenge online at any time, many schools have found that a very easy way to help many households join their team is to distribute **paper Energy Challenge forms**. You can go around with clipboards and ask people to fill them out at lunch, school events or have them at tables. Contact Neely, the Energy Challenge coordinator, for customized paper forms. You can include your school's

logo, about 200 words about your green team or school campaign for the back and 4-5 actions from the Energy Challenge website.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (OPTIONAL): \_\_\_\_\_



To save money and energy, my household promises to:	Average pounds of CO2 avoided	Dollars saved
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Do the Twist</b> – replace old incandescents with high-efficiency compact fluorescent light bulbs.	107 lbs/year per bulb	\$5/year per bulb
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Flip the Switch</b> – turn off lights and unplug appliances and electronics when not in use.	498 lbs/year	\$14/year
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Wash 'em Cold</b> – wash clothes in cold water to save money and preserve your clothing.	930 lbs/year	\$86/year
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Five is Just Fine</b> - take shorter showers for squeaky-clean energy savings.	261 lbs/year	\$24/year
<b>TOTAL SAVINGS</b>	<b>lbs/yr</b>	<b>\$ /yr</b>

Questions? Contact Neely Crane-Smith, Challenge coordinator at 612-335-5852 or ncranesmith@mncoe.org

### Example Paper Form

After you have collected completed forms, please mail them back to Neely to be entered onto the Energy Challenge website. Each person will then receive an email that shows them their pledge and prompts them to visit the website; folks without an email will get a letter from Neely and a copy of their pledge.

### Sample Campaign Ideas

**Earth Month in April.** Earth Day/Week/Month is a perfect venue to introduce your school to the Energy Challenge. See how many people you can sign up – set a goal, put up posters and Facebook everyone you know to ask them to visit the website and join your team.

**Use Social Media.** Facebook, Twitter, texting – however you normally talk to your friends, use this to promote the Energy Challenge (which also has a blog, Twitter feed and Facebook fan page).

**Link with Existing Events.** If you can tie in your Energy Challenge campaign with events that are already happening – like plays, sports events, conferences, picnics, etc – then it’s easier to get the message out to a big group of people.

**Challenge Your Rival.** Nothing is more motivating than beating your rival, so see if you can challenge that other school to an Energy Challenge competition! You can compete for a trophy or bragging rights. The team with the most members wins!

**Extra Credit.** A little extra credit goes a long way, especially when it comes to the Energy Challenge. Teachers that assign the Energy Challenge as extra credit (students can bring a print-out of their member page as proof) have high rates of participation and can create interesting conversations in classrooms.

How did the #1 school get there?

**St. Michael’s School in Prior Lake** is a small Catholic school with only 500 total students. So how did they become the #1 school on the Energy Challenge? Several dedicated teachers ran two separate campaigns. In 2007, Pat Benson ran a multi-grade competition, offered extra credit, and the classroom that signed up the most households won 5 extra minutes at recess! In 2009 Todd Kohorst noticed that St. Michaels had slipped from 1<sup>st</sup> place. He assigned the Energy Challenge as extra credit, brought Energy Challenge coordinator Neely to speak to classrooms, then distributed fliers to the rest of the school. And as of April 2010, they remain at the top!

Energy Challenge Resources

*Want to learn more about the Energy Challenge?*

The Minnesota Energy Challenge – [www.mnenergychallenge.org](http://www.mnenergychallenge.org)

The Challenge Blog – [mnenergychallenge.wordpress.com](http://mnenergychallenge.wordpress.com)

Follow us on Twitter – [twitter.com/mnenchallenge](https://twitter.com/mnenchallenge)

Fan us on Facebook – [facebook.com/mnenergychallenge](https://facebook.com/mnenergychallenge)

### **Local Nonprofits**

*Looking for speakers or resources on sustainability and climate change?*

The Alliance for Sustainability

[www.afors.org](http://www.afors.org)

Global Warming 101/The Will Steger Foundation

[www.globalwarming101.com](http://www.globalwarming101.com)

Clean Energy Resource Teams

[www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org](http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org)

Youth Environmental Activists of Minnesota (YEA! MN)

[www.yeamn.org](http://www.yeamn.org)

Office of Energy Security (Minnesota Department of Commerce)

[www.energy.mn.gov](http://www.energy.mn.gov)

Blue Sky Guide (a great local green fundraising tool)

[www.ecometro.com/twincities](http://www.ecometro.com/twincities)

Do it Green! Minnesota

[www.doitgreen.org](http://www.doitgreen.org)

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