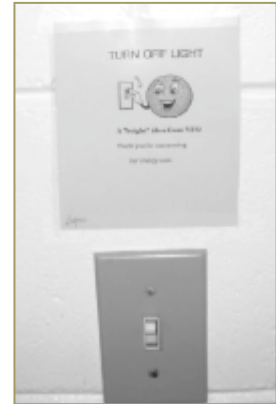


BLACKOUT DAYS

Tips for Hosting a 'Blackout Day'

courtesy of the Westbrook-Walnut Grove (WWG) team

- **Be sure to notify the school that you are planning to shut off the lights, make announcements, post posters etc...**
- **Start by shutting off the lights for only a portion of the day.**
The WWG YES! team toned it down from a whole day to an hour and a half. There has been some pushback to shutting off all the lights for the whole day.
-OR-
Shut off the lights in only one portion of the school for the day. For example host a "Dark Lunch" or something similar and turn off the lights in an area of the school so that classrooms without windows aren't disabled.
- **Get feedback on how it went**
Pass out paper surveys, or use the free online service www.surveymonkey.com. Be strategic about the number and types of questions you include in your survey so that you get honest and thorough feedback but it is not so long that people don't complete it.
- **Start by still allowing Smart board/computer/projector use and shutting off only the lights.**
The WWG YES! team may incrementally add these items to a list of what not to turn on during the Blackout event.
- **Help others remember and assist them in keeping the lights off.**
The WWG YES! team will turn off each of the classrooms' lights at the beginning of the period. They then go around and turn the lights back on in the classrooms to make sure they were off for the whole period.
- **Say 'thank you' to your school for complying**
WWG gave out cupcakes at the end of the school day.
- **Calculate the energy and cost savings:**
You can go to this site, <http://www.wattstopper.com/laa/assessquick>
-OR-
WWG calculates their savings by counting the light bulbs and noting the type (CFL, florescent...) and multiplying by the time they were off. Then get the electric rate from your school and you can calculate the savings!
- **Check the weather**
Is your 'Blackout Day' expected to be cloudy and rainy? Then re-schedule it for a sunnier day in the forecast. That way even though the lights are off, you'll be able to appreciate the natural "day-lighting" that occurs in your school.



Resources

- Kill-A-Watts (YES!) available for teams to track how much energy is used by individual electronics. Contact your YES! Coordinator to check one out!
- Hand Crank Generator (PWELC) available for teams' energy use education.

Ways to Take Blackout Days to a New Level

- Dave Pederson (PWELC) suggested a friendly challenge to see which school could save the most energy during Black-Out Day/hour.

- Minnesota Energy Challenge: <http://www.mnenergychallenge.org/Teams/Schools.aspx>. “The Energy Challenge provides in-depth guides to energy efficiency and conservation actions, as well as practical information about savings and cost. Members can also join teams for their city, business, congregation, school, neighborhood and other community organizations and use the Energy Challenge to track their group savings.”
- Take pledges for simple actions students can do in their homes, cars—and even where they work. Examples from other teams are: taking shorter showers, changing out incandescent bulbs for CFLs, eliminating one car trip per week; 100% recycling, etc.
- Teams could also bring this idea to community buildings - potentially as a fundraiser for their other YES! projects, and YES! teams could serve as “consultants” to help the community buildings meet their goals.

Additional Information

- EarthHour.org offers some inspiration. This is a worldwide campaign that encourages cities to shut off their lights for one hour.
- Cumberland County Blackout Days: news article which highlights some educational positives to shutting off the lights (<http://www.ksba.org/CumberlandCountyblackoutdays.aspx>)
- Why blackout days matter: Lighting is one of the largest users of energy in schools. According to the Alliance to Save Energy, “lighting accounts for nearly 50% of the electric bill in most schools.” (<http://www.coolcalifornia.org/article/save-energy-schools>)