

Cutting down on energy adds up to \$870,000

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SOUTHBURY — How's that for turning out the lights?

The Region 15 school district has saved \$870,000 over the past 22 months with an aggressive energy conservation program that has targeted all seven schools in Southbury and Middlebury and the central office.

The amount of the savings, the equivalent of taking 371 cars off the road for one year, surprised Keith McLiverty, the district's director of finance and operations, who credited faculty and students for taking energy conservation seriously.

"It truly is a compliment to everyone in the district," he said. "I go places and people are turning off lights when they leave the rooms. Everybody is working for the good of the cause."

Region 15 launched its energy awareness campaign in 2008 by partnering with Energy Education Inc., which helps school districts, churches and health care organizations make changes to reduce their energy consumption. The program is funded by the savings it generates, so clients can redirect saved energy dollars to other programs.

Energy Education created an energy savings plan for each school and the central office so the district could reduce its consumption of electricity, fuel oil and natural gas. Staff underwent training, and the district appointed Joe Seminara, head custodian at Pomperaug Elementary School, to do frequent energy audits at each school, and point out areas where im-



CONTRIBUTED

Pomperaug Elementary School Head Custodian Joe Seminara, left, and Lonnie Palmer, vice president of Energy Education, Inc., address the Region 15 Board of Education on Monday about the \$870,000 of energy cost savings Region 15 has achieved since it implemented an energy conservation program 22 months ago.

provements could be achieved.

The program is much more than simply turning off lights and computers — although that helps. McLiverty said staff have to think like energy conservationists — for example, they are expected to turn their classroom lights off when they leave. The district also invested in new technology to better manage its energy use.

A program now turns computers and other machines off at the end of the day. Computers also control the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems.

"We can control when units are turned on and off, and

what temperatures they're supposed to operate at remotely," McLiverty said. The computer can also tell when a piece of machinery, like a fan, breaks, resulting in inefficient operation. "Then we go in and fix it," he said.

New temperature standards were established for the winter and summer in all buildings, and some non-essential equipment, like old refrigerators, was removed, McLiverty said.

The result was significant savings, so much so that Region 15 was awarded an Award for Energy Stewardship by Energy Education at Monday's Board of Education meeting.