



Client Success story

Gresham-Barlow School District Saves Over \$1.5 Million in Cost Avoidance Annually with Energy Manager™

Client

Terry Taylor, Director of Facilities,
Gresham-Barlow School District

Geography

Gresham, Oregon

Vitals

- 12,000 students
- 20 schools
- 4 maintenance technicians
- 4 grounds keepers
- 46 custodians

Challenges

Early in his career, Terry Taylor learned the necessity of tracking and managing utilities. Upon Terry's arrival to Gresham-Barlow, he was handed an aggressive goal of getting the district from 28% to beyond 50% in cost avoidance and proving to the entire district that managing energy is a win-win.

Results

The district has now received the EPA ENERGY STAR® Partner of Year Award for Energy Management and Sustained Excellence 11 times. They have an ENERGY STAR rating of 97 and save over \$1.5 million in cost avoidance per year.

[brightlysoftware.com](https://www.brightlysoftware.com)

Q: When you joined Gresham-Barlow School District, what was the stance on energy management? Was anything being done about it?

Yes, Gresham-Barlow Schools was aggressive with energy management with 28 percent cost avoidance from base year 1997/98. Our CFO said she hired me to get to 50 percent cost avoidance, and about six years ago, we reached that goal at 52 percent cost avoidance. [When applied appropriately, cost avoidance is a more accurate metric to determine the success of energy conservation measures. It looks at avoided spending, not necessarily decreased spending.]

Q: What made you start looking for a solution to manage energy and other utilities?

Early in my career at another district, I met Carsie Denning and Kent Hudson with ACT and ACT Controls [Kent Hudson is a Brightly co-founder, formerly ACT]. They asked me how we were managing our utilities, and I did not have a good answer. Through my work with ACT and ACT Controls, I started managing the utility use data, starting with electric and natural gas. Then I moved to all utilities. At Gresham-Barlow Schools, our average school is 51 years old. Energy usage for our school facilities is about a third of our budget. It's paramount. Next to labor, it's the number one thing to track.

Q: How did you get your administration to care about managing energy?

It really came down to money. I have always worked for the business office, and it was easy to show the waste or the savings opportunity. If you know your data better than the CFO, then they listen. You want the CFO to be the one to take it to the superintendent.

Q: Why did you decide on Brightly Energy Manager™?

In 1998, [while at Northshore School District in Washington], I was Director of Maintenance and Warehouse. I asked how we were managing our utilities, and I was sent to the business office where the bills were paid. I quickly found out we were not managing our utilities. We started getting all utility bills into the solution. This gave me the information I needed to see the cost per square foot and cost per student, which were too high.

I contacted Electric Suppliers Puget Sound Energy and Snohomish County PUD. I used their data systems to show me the yearly, monthly, daily, then 15-minute interval use. I compared the electrical use against our DDC/BMS HVAC schedules and found that our

“

If you know your data better than the CFO, then they listen.

Terry Taylor

Director of Facilities, Gresham-Barlow School District

”

“

At that point we were at \$1.6 million reduced annually in our electricity and natural gas costs

systems were running wild and not following our set schedules. We had failures throughout our district. The first year we saved \$800,000 in electricity and gas. The second year we saved an additional \$500,000, and then the third year we saved an additional \$300,000. At that point we were at \$1.6 million reduced annually in our electricity and natural gas costs. Our district was then a believer.

We use Energy Manager today to track here in our school district because it has a wide range of programs to be able to track electricity, natural gas, water and solid waste, as well as recycling efforts we do.

Q: How do you define success when managing energy? What benchmarks/data do you look at?

Benchmarks are the start. Setting goals comes once you know your data. The fear comes from not knowing and not being confident enough to ask for help. I started so young cleaning toilets for a living — I didn't know commercial facilities. Brightly can help facility managers, but peers bring a safer introduction. Too many O/M directors believe that vendors only want the PO, but I know different. Vendors need to make money to stay in business and school districts need a trusted vendor at a value. Win-win.

Q: What have the results been since the district implemented Energy Manager?

We were at \$750,000 in cost avoidance in 2004 when I arrived at GBSD. Today we are at over \$1.5 million in cost avoidance annually. In 14 years at GBSD, that's over \$18 million in avoided cost.

Embedded within our Energy Manager program, we tie into the EPA ENERGY STAR® program. Our school district uses that as kind of a meter on how performance is going. Our average ENERGY STAR score is 97. It's really unheard of in the nation, but we use it competitively in our schools because the custodians are at the buildings managing their sites, and they all want to be number one. With our overall score being 97, they're all winners.

Back in 2006, we applied for some energy conservation awards, and we were awarded among major corporations. I had an opportunity to go back to Washington, DC with our school board, our superintendent and various members of our school district and receive that award and be able to share with the national platform what's going on with schools in Oregon. GBSD has now been awarded the EPA ENERGY STAR Partner of Year Award for Energy Management and Sustained Excellence 11 times.

“

In 14 years at GBSD, that's over \$18 million in avoided cost.

Q: What is your advice to peers who aren't managing energy yet?

You can't afford to not manage your utilities. If you don't know your energy use, then find out the energy cost. Either way, you can get to the information to start moving forward. This is not hard work; it just takes a plan. The money it costs to implement will be saved so, so soon. You have seen my numbers above.

Q: How do you recommend people who aren't managing energy get started in doing so?

Ask a local school district who is managing utilities for help. Have coffee to listen and learn. Or better yet, listen in on a Brightly webinar and then contact them.

