

JANUARY 2022

THE SPARK

A MID-YEAR IMPACT REPORT



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From the Desk of...

Shauni Nix

Friend of OEP,

We are so grateful for your continued support and encouragement. Heading into 2022, we are planning even more engaging, meaningful, and FUN opportunities for teachers and students.

In this mid-year update you will learn -

- How an OEP super star teacher and her students brought the first Grind2Energy system to a North American public school.
- How OEP has been sparking curiosity in classrooms through Careers in Energy, e3 Smart, Design Challenges, and more.
- More about our newest Education Coordinator, Abbey Thomas-- a former classroom teacher with a passion for all things energy.
- How we're planning a more sustainable tomorrow. Strategy hats are on!

I hope you will be just as inspired as we are by the dedication of teachers across the Buckeye State showcased throughout these pages. Wishing you some happy reading!



A lot of little changes can lead to a big change.

ReNEWable Beginnings at Dublin–Jerome

How much of our food ends up in the landfill?

That's the question Dublin-Jerome High School science teacher Ashley Dulin-Smith and her former students, Meghan and Kyra, sought answers to back in 2017. After attending an Ohio Energy Project Tour at the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland, Ashley became interested in their Grind2Energy technology--a waste-to-energy system designed to turn food waste into renewable energy and fertilizer. Her main question: could this same system be used at a school?

Sharing her experience in the classroom, Ashley caught the attention of then students Meghan and Kyra who decided to investigate. Conducting a

trash audit, Meghan, Kyra, and Ashley found that as much as 123, 840 lbs of trash could be heading to the landfill from Dublin-Jerome in a single year. That's a lot of trash!

With this information and the approval of Dublin-Jerome administration, the trio began working to get the waste-to-energy system in place. The team first needed to find funding to purchase the system. It took years of drafting requests--a few of which were thwarted by funding fluctuations due to COVID--but through passion for her students' project Ashley was able to secure funding through the Ohio EPA.

The system was finally installed in 2021 and is now in use at the school. Ashley is working with

staff and students to implement processes of sorting food waste and is excited to see how the first year goes.

Of the project's impact, Ashley says: "When you look at something like Grind2Energy, we're teaching all these standards just in a different way. But at the same time, we're making an impact for our community, for our school, and we're standing up and saying 'ok, we're ready to make a change.' And hopefully, that does inspire some other people to say 'ok, we're also ready to make that change.' And a lot of little changes can lead to a big change."

Here's to making some inspiring changes, Ashley!

Sparking Classroom Curiosity

Science is in full swing! From STEM Design Challenges to Energy Efficiency, OEP has been engaging teachers, students, and communities in hands-on education all school year long. Take a look below to see what we've been up to the past six months.

Careers in Energy

Energy opportunities abound! So far this school year, OEP has held virtual field trips to One Energy North Findlay Wind Campus & Wapakoneta Solar Farm located right here in the Buckeye State. Talking with in-career professionals, students learned about the "day in the life" of energy industry workers and gained insight into career pathways.

Potential Students Engaged: **7,809 so far** (program ongoing)

Potential Teachers Engaged: **222 so far** (program ongoing)

e3 Smart

Mitigating energy impact one classroom at a time, e3 Smart empowered students to take charge of their future. Equipped with a classroom curriculum and at-home energy kits, students not only gained a better understanding of energy and its impact but also took action at home, in their schools, and in their communities.

Students Engaged: **21,206**

Teachers Engaged: **330**

Community Members Engaged: **42,412**

STEM Design Challenges

Put on those critical thinking caps; it's time to design a wind turbine! OEP's STEM Design Challenges focused on the science of wind energy this school year. Through the process of designing their very own turbines, students learned all about how wind energy powers our world.

Students Engaged: **22,301**

Teachers Engaged: **346**

District Programs

From grade level specific programs to taking a ride on the energy bike, OEP has engaged 4 districts in customized energy learning this school year.

Classrooms Engaged: **51 so far** (programs ongoing)

Participating Districts: Worthington City Schools, Westerville City Schools, Dayton City Schools, Columbus City Schools



Staff Spotlight

This year, we welcomed a new rockstar energy educator to our team, Abbey Thomas! Abbey is a former classroom teacher and participant of Ohio Energy Project. Fortunate for us, Abbey's passion for science landed her with OEP in the summer of 2021. Read on to get to know the newest member of the team.

What led you to OEP?

"I attended OEP's e3 program as an educator and fell in love with the curriculum. The program to me was one-of-a-kind. OEP had a way of making energy applicable in the classroom, exciting as a teacher to teach, and something I craved to do in my future."

What interests you most about energy science?

"As a former educator, I loved teaching energy to students. It was something tangible, something that they not only used and related to, but also something they could [take] initiative in to better our planet."

Who is your favorite scientist?

"Galileo always has intrigued me--a scientist always focused up and looking into the unknown. But there is something...about Marie Curie being the first woman winning the Nobel Prize."

What is your favorite treat?

"Any coffee."

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Planning Today, Transforming Tomorrow

Energy is universal. Science is for all learners. It is this North Star that guides OEP to continuously develop and provide innovative STEM programs and essential learning materials to catalyze classrooms and empower young minds in energy literacy and leadership.

But this goal is not one that can be achieved without conscientious planning and goal setting. This year, OEP staff set out to develop a Strategic Plan to carry OEP into the next decade. Below are a few highlights of the plan and what can be expected over the next few years at OEP!

Goal 1: Building Diverse Partnerships

OEP is committed to working with a wide array of partners of like goals and philosophies. As part of this commitment, OEP is actively working to expand our partnership program, engaging local, state, and national partners in our work to deliver all things energy education to communities across the Buckeye State. Through engaging various industries, organizations, and thought leaders, OEP plans to provide space for all voices to join the conversation on energy literacy and sustainability.

Goal 2: Empowering Teachers & Students in Energy Literacy

OEP's mission is to inspire leadership and energy innovation in Ohio students and teachers. With that in mind, OEP is committed to working each year to ensure all learners have access to energy education--school budgets should not be barriers to science. Renewing our focus on serving under-resourced districts and communities, OEP plans to ensure that all young scientists have the chance to view themselves in STEM and stay curious about our world.

Goal 3: Curating a Household Reputation as a Trusted STEM Resource

Teaching is in our DNA, and we want all Ohioans to know they can turn to us with their energy science questions and curiosities. In order to open more minds to energy science, OEP is committed to bolstering our reputation as a trusted STEM resource through re-engagement in public outreach opportunities across the state. Additionally, OEP plans to utilize digital tools and spaces to solidify our presence as a leader in the energy education field to teachers, students, and communities.