ACTIVITY TIPS

Pocket Your Energy Savings

This activity appears in the section Use Energy Efficiently.

The Pocket Your Energy Savings activity asks students to implement a home energy saving program for three months and track actual savings on energy bills. The objective of this activity is to make students aware that people pay for the energy they use, and that this usage can be reduced with some simple energy conservation measures.

Please note: If students have moved recently, this activity will not be successful. Also, some parents may be reluctant to send to school personal information such as that found on utility bills. Teachers will need to assess the possibilities for success with this activity before assigning it to all students.

Utility Bill Analysis

Make sure students understand why they should compare the same three months of this year's and last year's bills—so they are comparing periods that have roughly the same weather patterns and family habits.

Ask students to bring their utility bills to class so you can help them with the analysis part of the activity. Make sure students are comparing actual energy used, not dollar costs. Help them look for these totals, which will show up in kWh used.

Results

In some cases students may find that even though their household energy use went down for the months they saved energy compared to those months in the prior year, their bills went up due to increased energy costs.

Some students may find that despite their energy conservation efforts they were not able to reduce household energy use compared to last year. Solving this mystery will take some detective work:

Have students think carefully about the activities in their home that might have contributed to this. For example, if students had more people living in their home or visiting in the current year period, this means more energy was used to run dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers, and water heaters for hot showers. If people were away on vacation, less energy would have been used.

If the current year period was a lot hotter or colder than the prior year period, this means more energy was used to run the heat or air conditioning for longer periods of time or at higher settings.

Or, if the household added some new appliances (such as a second refrigerator or freezer) in the current year, this will also increase energy use.