

# Snowline Joint Unified School District

Life Is On



Snowline Joint Unified School District leveraged two resources—Proposition 39 and an energy savings performance contract (ESPC)—to bridge a budget gap, enabling the district to cut energy costs and still make significant facilities improvements districtwide.

## The Challenge

Snowline Joint Unified School District (USD) was established in 1982 to serve the area in Southern California known as the High Desert. The district initially had 1,589 students enrolled in grades K-12. Today, enrollment in the district's two high schools, three middle schools, five elementary schools and one K-8 school totals more than 8,500 students.

Challenged over the years to maintain the school district's aging facilities, Snowline faced a daunting budget gap. The district needed voters to pass a bond issue to pay for a variety of much-needed capital improvements, but unfortunately the community did not support it.

Despite multiple bond failures, determined district officials refused to give up. The district proceeded with its Facilities Master Plan, which focused on modernization improvements. The passage of Proposition 39 (The Clean Energy Jobs Act) offered a new funding source for cash-strapped districts like Snowline. This initiative revised the

state's corporate tax code and has invested revenue for five years to help school districts make energy efficiency facility improvements. Interested districts are required to submit an Energy Expenditure Plan to the California Energy Commission for projects that target improving energy efficiency and expanding the generation of clean energy.

When Proposition 39 funding became available, Snowline staff knew which projects they wanted to implement, but they needed a partner to help turn those projects into a reality.

After issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Energy Savings Performance Contracting in late 2013, district officials selected Schneider Electric based on the company's positive references, experience and professionalism. The turnkey performance contract would allow the district to move forward with aspects of its Facilities Master Plan with no tax impact on local citizens.



### Customer Benefits

- Reduced energy and maintenance costs
- Enhanced learning environment
- Uniform equipment districtwide
- Significant improvements without raising taxes

## The Solution

Schneider Electric completed a small Phase 1 project for Snowline in 2014. The project, which was paid for entirely by Proposition 39 funding, implemented energy-efficient LED lighting with instant strike capabilities in three of the district's gymnasiums. It also included the renovation of a middle school gym's classroom-style ceiling, which had caused countless maintenance issues when ceiling tiles and lighting diffusers got knocked down or broken during class.

Phase 2 involved replacing all interior and exterior lighting throughout the district with longer lasting LEDs. In addition to decreasing maintenance costs associated with changing out and disposing of old bulbs and ballasts, maintenance staff will have more time to focus on other tasks. Furthermore, the long life of LEDs will significantly reduce the number of replacements needed over the next 20 years.

Schneider Electric also implemented an IT power management system to turn off computer equipment and other networked devices when not in use, and has deployed demand limiting strategies via the district's existing energy management system to limit peak demand charges.

As a result of the phase 2 project, five of the district's eleven schools will become zero energy campuses, commonly referred to as zero-net energy, and not increase their carbon footprint. (Zero energy campus or zero-net energy means the total amount of energy used annually equates to the amount of renewable energy created on-site.) Going forward, the district expects to reduce its utility costs by 28 percent as a result of this Phase 2 project.

## The Bottom Line

The performance contract enabled the district to tackle major facilities projects without having to raise local taxes. Snowline's efforts will also have a long-term, positive impact on the environment.

Proposition 39 funding will pay for nearly 20 percent of Snowline's Phase 2 costs. The remainder will be fully funded over time by cutting energy and maintenance costs. Overall costs for energy and maintenance will drop nearly \$7.8 million over the life of the performance contract.

Schneider Electric conducted an ASHRAE Level II Audit during the development phase, which is required for Proposition 39 projects. The audit included an evaluation of lighting, air quality, temperature, ventilation, humidity and other conditions that may affect energy performance and occupant comfort.

Both phases of the ESPC will have a significant environmental impact on the community, providing energy efficiency savings equal to removing 338 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, taking 72 cars off the roads or powering 43 homes.



## Project at a Glance

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Location      | Phelan, CA  |
| Project type  | Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC)  |
| Property      | 15 sites, including 11 schools (797,306 sq.ft.)   |
| Funding       | Proposition 39<br>Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC)<br>Lease purchase  |
| ECMs          | Districtwide interior/exterior lighting<br>Lighting controls<br>IT power management<br>Gymnasium ceiling modification<br>Demand limiting equipment and software |
| Utility costs | Reduced 28 percent (\$7.8 million)  |
| ESPC period   | 20 years  |
| Installation  | Phase 1 completed in 2014<br>Phase 2 scheduled for 2016   |

*“The performance contract gave us a cost-effective way to make necessary improvements to our schools without having to raise taxes.”*

Luke Ontiveros  
Superintendent

### Schneider Electric

1650 West Crosby Road, TX 75006 USA  
Phone: 800-274-5551  
Email: [info@buildings.schneider-electric.com](mailto:info@buildings.schneider-electric.com)

[enable.schneider-electric.com](http://enable.schneider-electric.com)

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