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ISD 197 gets national recognition for energy conservation efforts

School District 197 has been named an Energy Star Leader by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, according to Anne Anderson, the district's energy efficiency manager and coordinator of its Schools for Energy Efficiency (SEE) Program.

"The award acknowledges organizations that demonstrate continuous improvements in energy efficiency, not just in individual buildings, but district-wide," Anderson said. "During the past year, our district has achieved energy efficiency improvements of 10 points above our initial ranking." At this time, District 197 is only the 10th

school district in the nation to achieve this recognition.

Since launching the SEE program in September 2003, the district has reduced its energy use by 16 percent and avoided \$113,000 in energy costs. Anderson credits the work of students and staff, who have acted proactively by monitoring energy use, turning lights off and turning computers off. She also credits the district's Buildings and Grounds Department, Technology Department, building engineers and custodial staff for their assistance.

Anderson said students have been particularly enthused about the program. "They consider it fun and

important," she explained. Students have been especially vigilant in keeping an eye on energy use in the classroom.

"With continued conservation efforts, we hope to increase the level of our efficiency and achieve Energy Star status for some of our individual buildings," Anderson said. Friendly Hills Middle School in Mendota Heights, for example, is currently in the validation stage of the Energy Star rating process. As of January 2005, only 19 schools in Minnesota qualified as Energy Star schools.