



# Peaceful Schools Shines a Light on Community and Kids—and Saves Energy with National Grid

**Peaceful Schools, a community center based in Syracuse, New York, wants to shine a light on the power of peace.**

Since it was founded by a group of teachers in the wake of the tragic Columbine school shooting, this woman-owned business, operating in a disadvantaged community, has sought to teach children resilience skills through mediation, conflict resolution, social-emotional learning and school-based systems of support. The idea, says Dr. Lura Lunkenheimer, the President of Peaceful Schools, is that “when life throws a curveball at them, kids have that resilience to reach down and know, ‘How am I going to get through this?’”

Lunkenheimer started the program out of her own home in the late 1990s. But in 2019, Peaceful Schools achieved a new dream, moving into a 6,000 square-foot facility. The new location would make its training and services more accessible to partnering school districts, and allow for a much larger impact. But it also came with some issues.

“The building was 1980s mauve pink, and had a hospital sort of feel to it,” Lunkenheimer says. “We knew when we bought it we were going to need to renovate it. We saw the potential for what we wanted it to be. The challenge was, where do we start?”

Lunkenheimer and the Peaceful Schools staff created a punch list of potential improvements. When she received a mailer from National Grid promoting the Small Business Energy Efficiency Program, Lunkenheimer sensed opportunity: LED lighting upgrades, one of the items on her staff’s punch list, qualified for incentives through the program.

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Dr. Lura Lunkenheimer,  
President of Peaceful Schools  
in Syracuse New York.



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## Peaceful Schools, Cast in a New Light

Lunkenheimer contacted several qualified program vendors and selected one to manage the lighting upgrade project. LED lighting uses 90% less energy than incandescent, improves lighting quality, and lasts fifteen times as long as traditional bulbs. Plus, National Grid's Small Business Energy Efficiency Program reimburses LED lighting upgrades based on kilowatt hours saved annually to help cover the costs of upgrades and installation.

"It was a really quick turnaround," Lunkenheimer says. "Any time I had a question, our vendor was the conduit to National Grid for us." Thanks to over \$7,000 in incentives, Peaceful Schools was able to upgrade lighting at the entire facility. It made a big difference. "Without the program, we probably would have had to make some choices about doing some areas and not others," Lunkenheimer says. The business was also able to add significant outdoor lighting upgrades, increasing safety for kids, staff, and families.

## High Energy Savings—and Other Benefits

"There was not one hiccup in the program," Lunkenheimer says. "This was not a big lift." Once installed, the new LED lighting achieved valuable energy savings while expanding operations for the business. Cost savings analysis revealed the LEDs would save 7%-8% annually on the business's electric bill — keeping over \$3,200 in their pocket. The new lighting allowed the business to stay open 30 more days per year. "And within those days, we're also using our facility more. The lights are on much longer than they were prior, and we're still seeing savings," said Lunkenheimer.

"Any business owner will tell you those savings add up," Lunkenheimer said. She reinvests the savings into training for her staff and materials for the organization's programming. "I see it helping us be a stronger, more effective company."

## Energy Efficiency Programs Help the Community

In the end, LED lighting upgrades helped Peaceful Schools align with their main objectives. Their new facilities are more comfortable and safe. They have more funds to invest in helping kids stay healthy and happy. And they've also found the new lights have made them more of a local resource.

"With the renovations, we can offer our space to other organizations. Because my building is now really energy efficient, it's easy for me to say yes when somebody needs space to hold people for an event. If I can add to the common good, that allows all of us to work together and make our community the best it can be."

PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROJECT RECAP  
INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR LED LIGHTING  
PROJECTED ENERGY SAVINGS:

**27,348 (KWH)**

ESTIMATED ANNUAL SAVINGS ON ENERGY BILL:

**\$3,258**

PROJECT COSTS INCENTIVIZED BY NATIONAL GRID:

**\$7,483**



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