

## Energized by the sun—Mankato Area Public Schools goes solar

By Edell Fiedler, public information

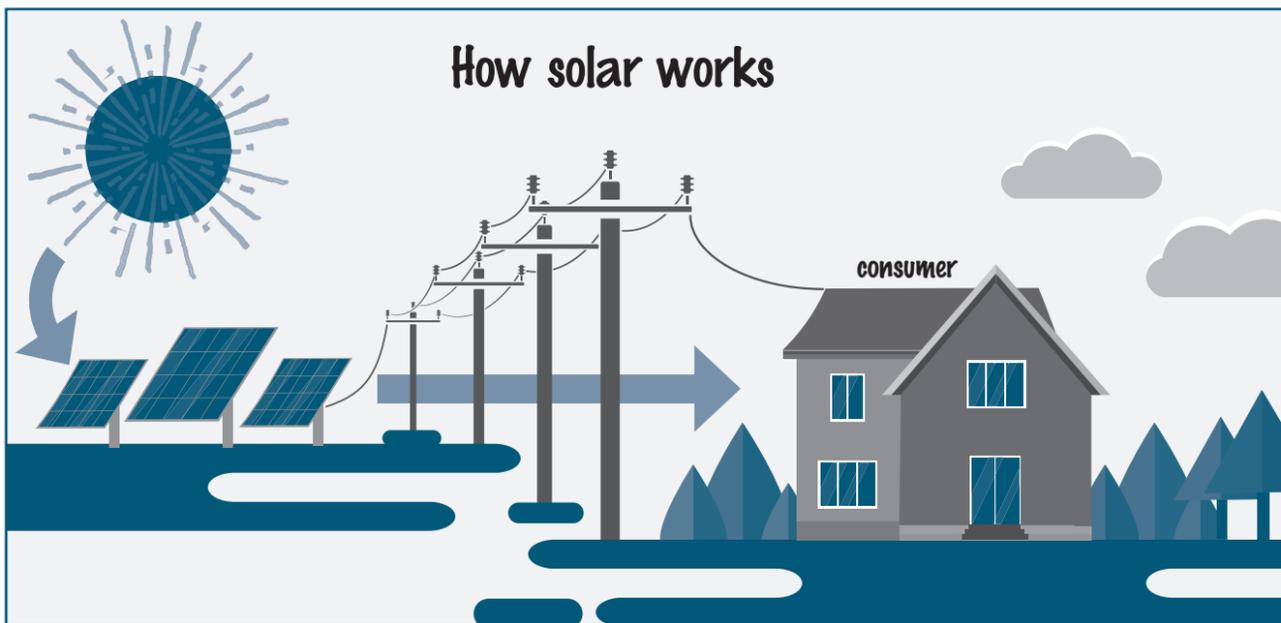
Solar electricity is now being used at most Mankato Area Public Schools' buildings. A unique contract with Geronimo Energy, and in partnership with Xcel Energy, to use solar energy is expected to result in a savings of more than \$1 million over the next 25 years. With costs locked in with Geronimo, prices will not increase for the next 15 years, according to Scott Hogen, director of facilities for Mankato Area Public Schools.

"Fourteen years into the contract, we'll review the subscription and evaluate savings," Hogen says. "If expectations are met, the subscription review will be done every five years until the 25-year contract is met."

While cost savings is an important factor in using solar energy, also significant is lessening environmental impacts and reducing the district's carbon footprint.

"We continue to look for opportunities to extend solar electricity throughout the district and hope to expand this option to remaining school buildings," Hogen says.

For more information contact Scott Hogen, director of facilities, at 507-345-5311 or shogen1@isd77.org. 



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## Educare Foundation enriches students

By Shelly Miller

Students at Mankato Area Public Schools (MAPS) benefit from generous grants the Educare Foundation awards schools every year. Since its inception in 1995, Educare has funded more than \$1.2 million in grants to MAPS through its Educator Initiative grants and Ed Waltman Mini-Grants.

Educare's financial support goes beyond the school district's general funding for programs and activities to enhance educational opportunities for students. "Educare funding supports ideas in innovation so staff can explore new ways to engage students in their learning," says Sheri Allen, superintendent of Mankato Area Public Schools. "The Educare Board of Directors is a positive group of community members that have vision and are committed to Mankato Area Public Schools. Their decisions support a world of learning for our students that goes above and beyond our normal operating budget."

Brian Corbett, chairperson of Educare Foundation, says starting with a solid foundation of curriculum and teaching allows for a strong learning superstructure. "We have a phenomenal top-tier school district in Mankato," Corbett says. "We are thrilled to partner with Mankato Area Public Schools to help take learning to the next level. The grants we support enhance innovative instruction and enrich students to be even more college and career ready."

Corbett says some of the highlights Educare has brought to the schools are acoustic guitars, biomedical science equipment, Heart Zone Systems, makerspace equipment including three dimensional printers and pens, Osmo kits and littleBits and SMART Boards.

For more information about Educare, visit [educarefoundation.com](http://educarefoundation.com), email [info@educarefoundation.com](mailto:info@educarefoundation.com) or call 507-387-1868. 



Students work with Osmo kits in the makerspace funded by Educare at Monroe Elementary School.