

## 2 Gilbert schools to get solar-power systems installed for free

by **Hayley Ringle** - Jul. 9, 2011 07:31 AM  
*The Arizona Republic*

Two Gilbert elementary schools will get solar-power photovoltaic systems installed free by Salt River Project in an effort to reduce the schools' net energy consumption and save the district money.

SRP will install the 13.2 kilowatt per hour roof-mounted systems at both Highland Park and Quartz Hill elementary schools in Gilbert Public Schools later this year, according to an agreement unanimously approved Tuesday by the governing board.

SRP will fund the purchase and installation of the project through federal stimulus money, and provide maintenance for the first 10 years of the 20-year agreement.

In return, GPS agrees to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the systems for the remaining 10 years. Maintenance could include a new inverter, which costs between \$2,000 and \$3,000, and replacement and cleaning panels, which costs a few hundred dollars, said Assistant Superintendent Clyde Dangerfield in his recommendation to the school board.

The Gilbert schools are among eight schools in Phase 2 of SRP's Solar for Schools program, and were considered because they are newer facilities with structurally sound roofs that can handle the installation, said SRP spokeswoman Patty Garcia-Likens.

The schools include Red Mountain and

Dobson high schools in Mesa.

"SRP provides the school with data on how it's (the solar panels) operating, which becomes a good educational opportunity," Garcia-Likens said. "This is showing real day-to-day information to the students on renewable energy."

SRP inspected the schools, and found that some minor roof repairs may be needed before the installation.

"I'm happy to tell you that we have now completed our inspections and that both schools have been selected to receive a solar photovoltaic system, subject to the completion of certain roof repairs that need to be made prior to installation," wrote Ed Grant, an SRP senior sustainability program strategist, in a letter to the district.

Annual savings are estimated to be \$1,765 based on current prices at the school campuses, a savings of more than \$70,600 over the 20-year agreement.

Quartz Hill Elementary is near Campo Verde High School off Germann Road and Val Vista Drive, and Highland Park Elementary is off

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Elliot and Recker roads.

Board member Helen Hollands asked that Playa del Rey Elementary School be considered in the future, since students from that school had requested solar power a few years back.

Dangerfield said he would keep that in mind and apologized for not remembering that.

He added that Gilbert's schools weren't originally considered for the project, but were included after an unidentified district decided not to enter into the SRP agreement.

Board member Shane Stapley said while he is not opposed to the agreement, he "philosophically" has problems with grants because "ultimately taxpayers are footing the bill."

"It's not free money," said Stapley, who added he was voting for the agreement with "suspicions."

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