



Photo by Kate Burke

Alyssa Fultz, Courtney Ray and Gaby Palafox, all fifth graders in Mrs. Nancy Bellows' class at York Elementary School, demonstrate some of the products from the "Energy Detective" kits handed out to the class by Chad Johnson and the Nebraska Public Power District.

Elementary, my dear Watts-on

YES fifth graders become
energy detectives

By **Kate Burke**
CORRESPONDENT

YORK — The parental command, "Shut the refrigerator door, you're letting all the cold air out!" is being used a lot less around York these days.

The fifth graders of Nancy Bellows' class at York Elementary School became "energy detectives" recently. Chad Johnson, representing the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), visited the class to talk about how to conserve energy and other resources around the home. Before he left, he bestowed on each of them the gift of an "Energy Detective" kit.

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ENERGY: Fifth grade students learn about energy and conservation

The kids were eager to talk about what they learned from Johnson and from their own investigations with their kits.

They put the digital thermometer into their refrigerators, and most kids reported that the temperature inside was accurate. How did their parents like that result?

"Cool!" called out one boy. Half a second later, he realized he had made a joke, and laughed with the rest of the class.

They also checked the temperature of the water coming out of their hot water taps. Many of them discovered that their hot water heaters were being overworked – and wasting energy. Hot water is effec-

tive for ordinary tasks, such as washing hands, at 120 degrees. A dishwasher requires water 10 degrees hotter. Why?

"To get them clean," the kids agreed.

But they would get clean at 120 degrees. Why bother making dishwasher water 130 degrees?

At last, the students explained that 10 degrees extra would sanitize the dishes.

Each kit also contained two compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulbs. The fifth graders rattled off a list of reasons why CFL bulbs are preferable to old-fashioned incandescent bulbs.

The ones in the kit use only 23 watts of power

while emitting the equivalent light of a 100 watt incandescent bulb. The bulbs cost a little more up front, but they last longer and save more energy than the incandescent bulbs.

The kids thought all this pretty handy, but Emilee Knutzen preferred the CFL bulb for its spiral shape.

"It has a design," she said.

"It's like, totally in," Alyssa Fultz chimed in.

The Filter Tone air filter alarm also made the kids think about how energy is used around their homes. Some students discovered that their bathroom fans weren't functioning as well as they could be because they were clogged with dust.

Others found it useful "in the basement."

Where in the basement?

"On the filter!"

What is the filter attached to?

The light bulb (CFL, of course) went on over their heads.

"The furnace!"

Several students admitted that their Energy Detective kits helped their parents discover that their furnace air filters needed cleaning or replacing.

The kids seem to have had the most fun with the faucet aerator that came in the kit. Properly attached, it allows the user to adjust the strength of the water flow. It could be used to slow the flow for tasks such as brushing teeth.

For other things, such as spraying water wherever, or at whomever, one might want it sprayed, full strength is best.

With the aid of the Energy Detective kits, the learning on energy and conservation