Arlington (August 4, 2014) – Arlington Public Schools held its first Special Summer STEM Experience July 21 through 30 at Weston High School. This program, funded by the district, allowed 35 high school students from Arlington High, Stillaguamish Valley School and Weston High to experience hands-on, project-based learning in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math. The focus of the summer experience was to better understand sustainable energy and apply their new knowledge in developing individual plans to reduce Arlington Public School’s carbon footprint.

Classroom time was spent researching renewable energy sources and current technology used in hydroelectric power, wind farms, solar power, and thermal energy along with developing small-scale models for hydropower. With the help and support of local and statewide businesses like Snohomish County PUD, Outback Power, Rocky Reach Dam, Andgar Corporation and Iron Horse Wind and Solar Farm, students gained knowledge about green energy sources available in Washington. Field trips during the two-week course included Rocky Reach and Ross/Diablo Dams (hydro power), Ferndale High School (solar array and wind turbines), Outback Power (solar), and a methane digester where owners and staff explained the technology used.

The culmination of the two-week course was on July 30 with presentations to district staff, parents and the public on the students’ suggestions for reducing the district’s carbon footprint. Students worked as couples or individually to produce visual and hands-on displays, while verbally articulating how their system would work and calculations on costs involved. They came up with some unique energy plans: using solar-powered school buses; adding turbines to rain water collection or waste water areas for hydro power; adding solar panels to schools and returning electricity to the grid where it could be used later or sold; and a geothermal system that would cool and heat buildings.

When asked about what they thought about the course, students were very positive and their only suggestion was to add a week to the course so they could learn even more!

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